Commentary

April 1997

"Lolita," My Mother-in-Law, the Marquis de Sade, and Larry Flynt

Norman Podhoretz

Day of the Race Men
Tamar Jacoby

Our Interests and Our Honor
Donald Kagan

Demjanjuk: A Summing-Up
Joshua Muravchik

O, Brother!
Joseph Epstein

Marketing the "New Middle East"
Eliyahu Kanovsky

Choreography by Jerome Robbins
Terry Teachout

Books in Review
Samuel McCracken • Robert B. Satloff • Joseph Adelson
David Guaspari • George Weigel

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE • $3.75/$4.50 CANADA • VOLUME 103 • NUMBER 4

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Go see a kibbutz.
That's how it all started."

"Actually he's off by a
few thousand years.
Start at the Western Wall."

"Whatever.
It's all beautiful."

Ask a thousand Israelis.
You'll get a thousand
reasons to visit Israel.
Call toll-free 1 888 77 ISRAEL,
or visit us at www.infotour.co.il
Israel Ministry of Tourism.

The new Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center

NO ONE BELONGS HERE MORE
THAN YOU.

LICENSED TO ERI.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commentary®

Vol. 103 · April 1997 · No. 4

ARTICLES

23
"Lolita," My Mother-in-Law, the Marquis de Sade, and Larry Flynt *Norman Podhoretz*
Reflections on art, pornography, and censorship, after the taboos have all been smashed.

36
Day of the Race Men *Tamar Jacoby*
From Bayard Rustin to Louis Farrakhan, black political leadership has traced a precipitous decline; are there no alternatives?

42
Our Interests and Our Honor *Donald Kagan*
To ignore the intangibles in foreign policy is to be false to history, and unrealistic to boot.

46
Demjanjuk: A Summing-Up *Joshua Muravchik*
The man acquitted as "Ivan the Terrible" of Treblinka was beyond doubt a participant in mass murder.

51
O, Brother! *Joseph Epstein*
Despite a grand new theory, sibling rivalry is not the hidden spring of human history.

OBSERVATIONS

55
Marketing the "New Middle East" *Eliyahu Kanovsky*
The economic and political deformations of Israel's Arab neighbors augur ill for regional prosperity, let alone for peace.

DANCE

58
Choreography by Jerome Robbins *Terry Teachout*
Is he our greatest native-born dance classicist or an artist of the second rank, or both?

LETTERS

3
Assisted suicide; Israel and Netanyahu; federalism; etc.

BOOKS

63 The Dictionary of Global Culture edited by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Samuel McCracken*

65 The Middle East by Bernard Lewis *Robert B. Satloff*

66 Slouching Towards Gomorrah by Robert H. Bork *Joseph Adelson*

69 A Tour of the Calculus by David Berlinski *David Guaspari*

70 The Unknown Lenin edited by Richard Pipes *George Weigel*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editor Neal Kozodoy
Managing Editor Brenda Brown
Senior Editor Gabriel Schoenfeld
Editor-at-Large Norman Podhoretz
Publisher Jonathan R. Cohen
Advertising Director Sarah M. Stern
Production Associate Matthew J. Burke

COMMENTARY (ISSN 0010-2601) is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022 Telephone: (212) 751-4000. Fax: (212) 751-1174. E-MAIL: Commentary@compuserve.com. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Letters intended for publication may be edited. Single copy is $3.75; $39 a year, 2 years $72, 3 years $105—Add $8.00 per year for all foreign subscriptions, including Canada and Latin America. For subscription information call: (800) 829-6270—Periodical postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to COMMENTARY, 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022. Copyright © 1997 by the American Jewish Committee; all rights reserved under International and Pan American Copyright Conventions—Indexed in *Reader's Guide*, *Book Review Digest*, and elsewhere—Available in reference systems produced by University Microfilms International (800) 521-0600 and Information Access Company (800) 227-8431—U.S. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors Inc., 1130 Cleveland Rd., Sandusky, OH 44870. Printed in the U.S.A.

COMMENTARY is a member of The Leadership Network. (212) 725-2106; Fax (212) 779-1928.

The Commentary Publication Committee

Robert L. Pelz, *Chairman*

Morris B. Abram
Stanford M. Adelstein
Norman E. Alexander
Morris H. Bergreen
Maurice S. Binkow
Howard I. Friedman
Stephen Friedman
Roger Hertog
Martin S. Kaplan
Morton A. Kornreich
Herbert T. Mines
Herman J. Obermayer
Robert A. Riesman
Frederick P. Rose
Gordon S. Rosenblum
Gary L. Rosenthal
Michael Saperstein
Michael W. Schwartz
Nanette Scofield
Henry Sherman
Walter P. Stern
Thomas J. Tisch
Ronald G. Weiner

A Statement of Aims

In sponsoring COMMENTARY, the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY's contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. The sponsorship of COMMENTARY by the Committee is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.

American Jewish Committee

Robert S. Rifkind, *President*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commentary
April 1997

Letters from Readers

Assisted Suicide

To the Editor:

"Courting Death: Assisted Suicide, Doctors, and the Law" by Leon R. Kass and Nelson Lund [December 1996], while tendentious and muddleheaded on the nature of our Constitution, is at heart—and, as a non-Jew, I can say this most persuasively—profoundly disrespectful of the Jewish tradition of religious tolerance. For most of recorded history Judaism has, alas, been a small, beset, and persecuted religion. Appropriately for its own existence, in the last two millennia it has vehemently called for and supported religious toleration.

As the ethicist-philosopher of law Ronald Dworkin has so beautifully set forth in *Life's Dominion*, how a person chooses to end his life is a profoundly religious act: "quintessentially religious" is how Dworkin describes it. It will be recalled that the First Amendment provides that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Accordingly, no government may lawfully intrude into the inherently personal-conscience-religious decision of how one chooses to die.

The authors' view of the Constitution is so crabbed and retrograde it would be summarily dismissed by a first-year law student. The Constitution is a living, vital instrument, meant to endure for a long period. Plainly, in 1789, all the subjects that might fall within its purview in succeeding centuries could not be set down. The Constitution does not mention assisted suicide. So what? Neither does it mention abortion (declared protected in *Roe* v. *Wade*), movies, or sound-recordings, the last two unmistakably comprehended within the free-speech/free-press provisions of the First Amendment.

The more serious indictment of the article, however, is its schizoid view of the American physician. On the one hand, the physician is held out as engaged in a virtually religious calling. On the other, he is painted as a proto-murderer, waiting for any opportunity to slay his hapless patient.

C'mon, give me a break! This is ridiculous.

If physicians were really so intent on murdering their patients they would *today* find innumerable opportunities to do so, by withholding life-support, giving overdoses of drugs, etc. But in fact, there is no reliable evidence of any except rare and isolated instances of physicians acting to murder their patients.

It is paradoxical that the death-with-dignity movement has a higher regard for the ethical nature of American medicine than do those fighting this movement, ostensibly in the interest of preserving the high ethics of physicians.

Finally, Messrs. Kass and Lund are profoundly disrespectful of freedom. They wish to curtail the freedom of dying patients to exercise their own choices as to the "quintessentially religious" decisions involved in their dying. They wish to curtail the freedom of physicians to respond to their patients as their individual religious-ethical beliefs call upon them to do. For physician aid-in-dying is at heart the freeing of the physician: to follow his religious-ethical conscience.

Messrs. Kass and Lund are afraid of freedom: for themselves, for patients, and for other physicians.

Winthrop Drake Thies
Hemlock Society of New Jersey, Inc.
Maplewood, New Jersey

To the Editor:

Leon R. Kass and Nelson Lund maintain that if the Supreme Court

decides whether to promulgate a new constitutional doctrine effectively

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ending the ability of state governments to interfere with physician-assisted suicides, . . . judges will henceforth become responsible for resolving some of the most delicate aspects of the relationship between physicians and their patients.

Should readers believe this simply on the authors' word? Has this been the Dutch experience?

Courts become involved in the details of medical decisions only if patients, medical organizations, or doctors find fault with one another's decisions and, at the instigation of lawyers or with legal advice, think that something can be gained through litigation. How much and what kind of litigation would come about if assisted suicide were legalized is an open question. The *New York Times* published an estimate that only 2 percent of medical-malpractice cases now result in litigation. Messrs. Kass and Lund indicate in their article that American doctors already expedite death. Evidently, they have been doing so without having unleashed many lawsuits.

The authors cannot decide whether doctors are, or should be, guided by medical ethics. On the one hand, they cite ancient medical codes, like the Hippocratic Oath. On the other hand, they say that American doctors cannot be counted upon to act in accordance with such codes. Which story should readers believe? According to generally available information, today in the U.S. 13 percent of GNP is sluiced through medical practice yet tens of millions are uninsured; doctors underserve or overserve patients depending on the terms of medical payment; and millions of popular surgeries prove to have been unnecessary.

Medical ethics does not explain, and obviously cannot control, the behavior of American medical professionals. So why do Messrs. Kass and Lund warn that the relatives of patients could have something to gain by assisting suicide? Who has more to gain, or lose, by establishing sensible rules about assisted suicide? Certainly, health administrators, doctors, and nurses have something to gain by keeping patients alive. But is the net financial result of medical personnel postponing death to pauperize the patients themselves, their survivors, the pool of medically insured, and/or the taxpayers who fund Medicare and Medicaid?

I propose that Messrs. Kass and Lund join the rest of us mere mortals in a common quest to determine when enough zeal in prolonging life is enough, and when we the people have a duty to get on with death so as not to deplete our survivors of their resources or their vitality.

PHILIP GROTH
University of Wisconsin Centers
Janesville, Wisconsin

TO THE EDITOR:

Even if I could present the case *for* assisted suicide with as much knowledge about medicine and law as Leon R. Kass and Nelson Lund do in attempting to prove that this practice is immoral, I doubt that I could convert them any more than their article converted me. Our views on euthanasia, as on birth control, abortion, homosexuality, etc., are based on feelings that were formed long before we could reason about them.

But if we leave aside the question of morality and discuss only whether those who assist in suicide should be punished as criminals, I think I can convince those who consider such an act to be immoral that they should nevertheless support its legalization.

All Americans generally agree that our government should not interfere with our freedom to act in accordance with our conscience when such acts do not harm others. Evidence of this position can be found in our unwillingness to have the government prohibit many practices that most of us consider immoral. But when we say we want our government to prohibit acts which harm others, we mean acts which are already judged to be criminal by all of us. That is why we cannot forcibly prevent someone from attending a church even if our religion judges that church to be immoral.

To act according to one's conscience, whether it be to choose assisted suicide or to refuse it, does *not* require the government to protect us (provided that we are adults) from examples that may tempt us to act differently from the way we might have acted in the absence of such examples.

If assisted suicide becomes legal, all of us will have the freedom to refuse as well as to choose such an action, according to our consciences, without violating the law. Isn't such a situation more consistent with our democratic ethos, as it has developed throughout our history, than the present situation in which the government denies this basic freedom?

LAWRENCE HYMAN
Ridgewood, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Leon R. Kass and Nelson Lund are so lucid and logical that I must accept their conclusion that assisted suicide could degrade the doctor-patient relationship and jeopardize salvageable patients. Is there, then, no relief from the houses of horror which even well-run nursing homes have become, now that their residents' average age is much higher than it was years ago? Every day it is my depressing duty to visit such a place, depressing even though the staff is remarkably sweet. However, about a third of the residents are active, a third semi-senile, and a third not conscious of their surroundings. One woman spent four years comatose, at a cost to Medicaid of about $70,000 per year. Residents cost Medicare several thousand dollars a year, too, not counting major surgery.

The staff attempts to entertain the residents, but half the residents cannot see, hear, read, or understand television or any but the simplest conversations. Many of the residents have nightmarish delusions, hostile misunderstandings with other people, or sit in silence all day, head aslant. They lack a meaningful quality of human life. What are we doing in warehousing those shells of human beings?

RICHARD H. SHULMAN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

The subject of assisted suicide can be broken down

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into three issues: (1) should assistance in suicide be allowed; (2) if allowed, who should be permitted to assist; and (3) who should be barred from assisting?

Although ambivalent on the first issue, I have a strong opinion on the third: I am opposed to having physicians assist in suicide. Thus, I was pleased to see the article by Leon R. Kass and Nelson Lund.

My father, aged ninety-eight, died at home of natural causes last year. He talked of suicide on occasion, usually in a doctor's office. But I do not think he really wanted to die. I think he was just protesting the indignities, limitations, and pains of old age, of which he endured many. After all, he could have tried suicide, but he never did. However, because of a physician's position and knowledge, my father would have been very susceptible to an offer of "assistance" from his doctor, especially, perhaps, to spare me the burden of caring for him.

BARBARA BROADDUS
Burlingame, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for a very disturbing article on euthanasia. My only regret is that the authors did not go far enough in warning the public against legalizing assisted suicide. If euthanasia were ever legalized in the United States, it would be only a matter of time before the politicians realized how much money could be saved by this terrible practice. Then the next step would be to make it compulsory. Yes, compulsory. Liberal do-gooders have a remarkable talent for making compulsory everything that is not specifically forbidden by law.

Some of your readers may think that voluntary and involuntary euthanasia is tolerated only in Holland. I do not have any definitive proof, since I am only a layman, but if my ninety-two-year-old mother's passing several years ago is any indication, this terrible practice has already crossed the Atlantic into Canada.

My mother underwent surgery for cancer about three months before her death. About ten days before she died, she was admitted to the palliative-care unit of the Baycrest Centre in Toronto. She did not have any serious problems with pain at that point and was amazingly lucid considering her advanced age and condition. Two days later, she was hooked up to a morphine pump, without any warning or consultation with me. From that moment on, she never spoke another word and died about a week later.

The social worker I complained to told me not to worry, since it takes the body several days to get used to morphine. After a few days I complained to the attending physician and suggested to him that he was practicing euthanasia by stealth. He told me that it is not possible to kill with morphine because the body metabolizes it very quickly.

Many Americans envy Canadians because we have socialized medicine. Don't. At least your Dr. Kevorkian is honest about what he does.

ELIEZER GREISDORF
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

TO THE EDITOR:

In their masterful "Courting Death: Assisted Suicide, Doctors, and the Law," Leon R. Kass and Nelson Lund make a key point when they note that terminal illness is notoriously difficult to predict accurately. Gerald would agree. He was in his early twenties when a highly malignant tumor was diagnosed. When I first met him he was bedridden and short of breath. He had masses throughout his body that actually grew from day to day. My teachers, experienced cancer specialists, agreed he had days to live. Nevertheless, he was given high-dose chemotherapy. The tumors shrank and eventually disappeared. Gerald went on to finish college, start a career, get married, and father a nor-

Gramercy Park Hotel

Your Private Oasis Just South of Midtown Manhattan

Imagine...You're just minutes away from a trip to Europe! Whether you're dining on one of Chef Robert's 20 freshly prepared pastas ($12.50 - $19.50) or planning a wedding, (packages begin at just $57 per person), you'll find our hotel to be an oasis of Olde World charm. With Soho, the Village, Madison Square Garden and Off-Broadway theaters in the neighborhood, make it your business to pleasure yourself in style.
Our weekend Brunch ($14.95) is also a longtime favorite.

Singles $135-$140 · Doubles $145 · Suites $180 & Up

21st Street & Lexington Ave.
New York, NY 10010
212-475-4320
Fax (212) 505-0535
Out of state call toll-free:
1-800-221-4083

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mal child. Had we "euthanized" him, we never would have discovered our error.

Gerald is a striking example of the inaccuracy of predictions of life expectancy, but hardly the only one. In a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1991, cancer specialists predicted that 156 cancer patients had less than a year to live. In fact, 55 percent of these patients were still alive at one year, 15 percent at two years, and 3 percent at three years. All the patients had been diagnosed by experienced pathologists and had cancers that were not especially responsive to therapy. If specialists are wrong this often in patients with clear diagnoses, how often will general physicians be wrong in dealing with less firm diagnoses?

Perhaps this practical argument will be more effective than moral or legal arguments have been. When I first saw Gerald three decades ago, "physician-assisted death" meant a concerned doctor committed to caring for the patient until the end. That it now means something quite different is not a source of pride.

DAVID C. STOLINSKY, M.D.
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

The article by Leon R. Kass and Nelson Lund was wonderful: it is by far the best thing I have read on this subject.

JOSEPH ASTARITA
New Rochelle, New York

LEON R. KASS and NELSON LUND write:

Our critics appear not to have grasped our main point: even if the Supreme Court finds some sort of freedom to commit suicide protected by the Constitution, the Court should nonetheless uphold state statutes prohibiting *assisted* suicide. These laws serve rational and important practical purposes: they protect vulnerable patients against manipulated "choices" for death and against nonvoluntary euthanasia; they support the *fragile* ethic of medicine, which protects doctors against their own weaknesses by insisting on a bright-line distinction between allowing to die and deliberately killing. The state laws defend the general interest in keeping the healing profession from becoming also the death-dealing profession.

The Hemlock Society's Winthrop Drake Thies subscribes to the Humpty-Dumpty school of constitutional interpretation: the words of the Constitution mean whatever I want them to mean and the Constitution proscribes all the laws I don't like. This is clear on the face of Mr. Thies's letter, when he assumes that the phrase "*Congress* shall make no law . . ." means "*no government* may lawfully. . . ." Similarly, Mr. Thies assumes that the absence of any reference to suicide in the Constitution is quite irrelevant to the constitutionality of laws against assisted suicide. Contrary to Mr. Thies's suggestion, first-year law students do not universally treat the words of the Constitution as an irrelevancy, and the Supreme Court does so only rarely. In any event, we did not assert that the Constitution's silence about suicide settles the constitutional issue. We did say that neither the Constitution nor the Supreme Court's precedents provide a compelling basis for invalidating laws against *assisted* suicide, and we adhere to that claim.

Mr. Thies's second point seems to be that laws against assisted suicide infringe on the religious freedom of patients and physicians. This seems to be the Humpty-Dumpty approach applied to the First Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom. If I say that assisted suicide is a "quintessentially religious" act, then the act is protected by the Constitution. If this were accepted, then any law would become unenforceable when someone mouthed the word "religion" while violating it.

Mr. Thies's worse than Humpty-Dumpty attitude toward religion is revealed in his sophistic attempt to make allies for the Hemlock Society by appealing to what he calls "the Jewish tradition of religious tolerance." For reasons of self-preservation Jews welcome toleration, but *as Jews* they will have no truck with assisting suicide. According to *authentic* Jewish tradition, a Jew is obliged to accept martyrdom rather than commit an act that willfully ends an innocent human life. Further, Jews have sharp memories about what can happen when other people start justifying the taking of worthless life. Mr. Thies should stick to his own Hemlock "religion."

Philip Groth rightly believes that there are unanswered questions about the exact effects that legalizing assisted suicide would have. But he is wrong to be so confident that the proscription against physician-assisted suicide is little more than an obstacle to sensible rules that would save money for everyone, from survivors to the taxpayers. The last paragraph of his letter is also shocking for the insouciance with which it ignores the fundamental distinction, heavily emphasized in our article, between the prudent withholding of life-prolonging treatments and the killing of patients by their doctors.

Lawrence Hyman argues that the government should allow any individual to commit any act that does not itself harm another person, even if the legalization of such acts may promote a great deal of harm to many persons. This sort of insistence on abstract principle, heedless of the consequences, implies that we should also legalize: indentured servitude, polygamy, all recreational drugs, prostitution, cruelty to animals, and the possession by individuals of the ingredients for nuclear weapons. We will take a pass on Mr. Hyman's version of "our democratic ethos."

We agree with Richard H. Shulman that many people have an appallingly low "quality of human life," and that keeping some patients alive can cost a lot of money. We do not agree, however, that these facts suggest a need for euthanasia. Our answer to Mr. Shulman's last question is simple: we are refraining from murder.

Proponents of assisted suicide who rest their case on autonomy and who naively believe, despite the evidence from Holland, that the practice will be confined to those who, sound of mind, freely elect death for themselves, should be stopped short by the suggestions of Mr. Groth ("a duty to get on with death") and Mr. Shul-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man ("warehousing those shells of human beings"). The burden of proof falls on those who want us to believe that we can regulate the hemlock once we let it out of the bottle.

We thank Barbara Broaddus, Eliezer Greisdorf, and David C. Stolinsky for their informative examples, and Joseph Astarita for his kind words.

Israel and Netanyahu

TO THE EDITOR:

It is futile to argue with an ideologue, but particularly so when the ideologue is Norman Podhoretz. In "The Tragic Predicament of Benjamin Netanyahu" [December 1996], Mr. Podhoretz argues that the next Arab-Israeli war is imminent because Benjamin Netanyahu is being pressured to return occupied Arab territories under the Oslo accords.

Mr. Podhoretz favors Israel's retention of all the territories occupied in 1967. Why? Because the Arabs cannot be trusted, and those drooling Israelis such as the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and his successor, Shimon Peres, who have supported peace with the Palestinians have only succeeded in setting the stage for the next war.

Under Adolf Hitler, Jews could not be trusted, and the Final Solution was the logical answer to the Jewish problem. Of course, Mr. Podhoretz is not suggesting a similar fate for the Palestinians. His Final Solution is more convoluted. We are told that we should not mess with Netanyahu's plans for the Palestinian territories and the Golan Heights. We should not protest his starvation policies or his declared policy of populating the occupied territories with more Jewish settlers or his policy of creating facts on the ground to make the return of these territories to their legal owners meaningless. The time will certainly come, not for a holocaust but for final expulsion. Netanyahu's Minister of Infrastructure is on record as favoring such a course.

The rantings of Mr. Podhoretz against Egypt, Jordan, the Arabs, and indeed against the whole world are to be expected from a crypto-fascist thinker who views the Palestinians and Arabs as subhumans with no rights. But this type of thinking proved to be the undoing of fascism.

ABDELALEEM I. EL-ABYAD
Minister and Head of Office, Press and Information Bureau
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article, Norman Podhoretz writes that I was "forced to concede" that the opening of the archeological tunnel in Jerusalem by the Israelis in September 1996 could be justified from an archeological, touristic, and spiritual viewpoint and that it threatened no Muslim religious sites.

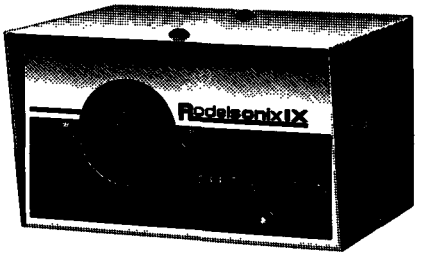
Nothing of the sort. I was not "forced" at all. And I was not "conced[ing]" anything. I was simply trying to write a balanced piece. Would Mr. Podhoretz say that I was "forced to concede," as I wrote in the same piece, that "[Arafat] is incompetent, duplicitous, and corrupt. He breaks agreements. He tortures his own people and denies them basic rights"?

Mr. Podhoretz paints in black and white; I, in shades of gray. Just because he does not like my conclusion ("[Netanyahu] is very clever, but he has no judgment"), Mr. Podhoretz refers to "the likes of Shanks" and to my criticisms of Netanyahu in opening a new exit to the tunnel as simply a "compendium of the conventional wisdom and politi-

Rid your home or plant of pests and vermin with the ...

Rodelsonix IX still only $69.95*

**But read this ad for an even better deal!*



Mice, rats, roaches, bats, fleas, spiders and other pests make life miserable at home or at the plant. Old-fashioned poisons get rid of them—but only temporarily, and they are a hazard to you and to your pets. *Rodelsonix IX* works on a different principle: It delivers a tremendous blast of ultra-sound—inaudible to you and to your pets—that disrupts the nervous system of those pests. They'll leave your home within a few weeks—never to return. There is nothing to prepare, nothing to set up—no poison and no mess. Pests just disappear.

Rodelsonix IX is a powerful industrial-type unit that protects up to 10,000 sq. ft. (70,000 cu. ft.). It has six variable pitch and "loudness" settings. You can even adjust it to keep larger pests, such as raccoons, pigeons, or rabbits at bay. Since it's clad in an enamel steel housing you can even use it outdoors.

•Rodelsonix IX *is an industrial-type unit, the most powerful you can get. It's a humane, clean, and*

Rodelsonix IX has been designed and engineered to work in restaurants, factories and food processing plants. It's that powerful and that effective. We can still offer this top-of-the-line industrial unit for just $69.95. But here's an even better deal: ***Buy two for just $139.90, and we'll send you a third one, with our compliments—absolutely FREE!*** Get rid and stay rid of those nasty pests once and for all. Get the best—get *Rodelsonix IX* today!

FOR FASTEST SERVICE, ORDER
TOLL FREE (800) 797-7367
24 Hours a Day, 7 days a week.

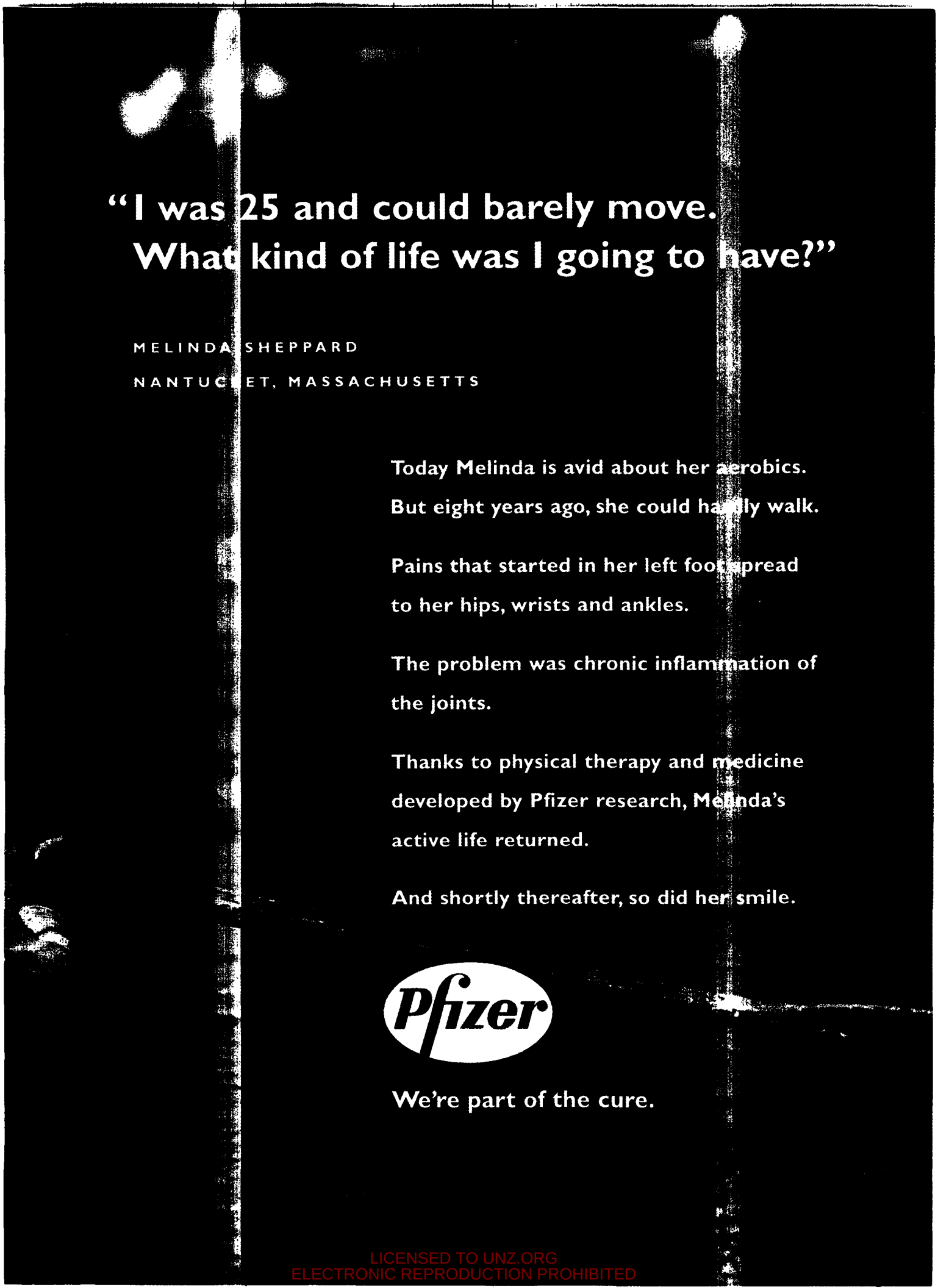
Please give order **#1007C730** for Rodelsonix IX(s). We need daytime phone # for all orders. Add $4.95 standard shipping/insurance charge for 1; $9.90 for three (plus sales tax for California delivery). You have 30-day return and one-year warranty. We do not refund shipping charges.

For Customer Service and for wholesale/premium quantity orders, please call 415-543-6675.

since 1967
haverhills®
185 Berry St., San Francisco, CA 94107

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


"I was 25 and could barely move.
What kind of life was I going to have?"
MELINDA SHEPPARD
NANTUCKET, MASSACHUSETTS
Today Melinda is avid about her aerobics.
But eight years ago, she could hardly walk.
Pains that started in her left foot spread
to her hips, wrists and ankles.
The problem was chronic inflammation of
the joints.
Thanks to physical therapy and medicine
developed by Pfizer research, Melinda's
active life returned.
And shortly thereafter, so did her smile.
Pfizer
We're part of the cure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cally-correct interpretation of the crisis."

Mr. Podhoretz would be far more effective if he did not regard everyone who disagrees with him as a knave or a fool.

One question he does not face: why were so many Israelis and so many American Jews and all the commentators that he cites in his article so critical of Netanyahu's opening of the tunnel exit? Are we all part of an anti-Zionist conspiracy? Are we all completely lacking in judgment?

In the *Washington Post* op-ed piece (reprinted in the *International Herald Tribune*) from which Mr. Podhoretz quotes, I refer to the continued closure of the border, preventing Palestinian workers from working in Israel, as a "needless economic restriction" imposed "under the guise of security needs." Mr. Podhoretz is incredulous that I could question the security basis of closure. The fact is that closure is generally recognized as an economic lever rather than a security measure. As the *Jerusalem Post* (hardly a Peace-Nownik publication) observed, "It is hard to think of a single case in recent times of a Palestinian worker with a permit committing a terrorist act."

Moreover, the border between the West Bank and Israel is inevitably porous: it is over 300 miles long; conservative estimates are that between 10,000 and 15,000 Palestinian workers cross illegally every day. Even during the *intifada*, men over thirty-five with wives and children and no previous record were not likely to be terrorists: such people quite clearly do not fit the terrorist profile, and keeping them out serves no security purpose.

Now to Hebron, about which I have written that providing security to the Jews living there while at the same time redeploying Israeli troops is like squaring the circle. No less a hawk than Hillel Halkin, writing in the generally hard-line *Forward*, has criticized Netanyahu for demanding the right of "hot pursuit." Such a right, he says, is, in the Hebron situation, "all but meaningless. . . . [I]t has no military value." Terrorists do not make their moves in view of Israeli soldiers. The right of hot pursuit, Halkin concludes, is merely a "symbol," and a "poorly chosen" one at that.

The point is that Netanyahu has not conducted himself well since his election, even in the view of many of his supporters. This does not make demons or traitors out of those of us who say so.

HERSHEL SHANKS
Editor, Moment
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

It eludes me why Norman Podhoretz insists on bringing up the canard of the "Jewish" electoral majority in an ostensibly strategic and political analysis of Israel's current situation.

As a campus activist in the early 1980's, I frequently found myself in agreement with neoconservative foreign-policy positions—despite my social-democratic convictions—because I understood them to have derived from a fundamental commitment to democratic values. Has the meaning of democracy undergone a miraculous transmutation? Netanyahu himself unabashedly courted the Arab vote during the elections whenever the opportunity arose. Presumably he did not warn them in advance that their votes counted for less than those of Jews.

For the past ten years, as an Israeli citizen and soldier, I have watched with concern the evolving delegitimation of Israeli Arabs by a small but growing minority on the Right. It was manifest in the elevation of Rehavam Zeevi, whose party advocates the ethnic cleansing of Israeli Arabs, to a cabinet post in the Shamir government. It was manifest in the ugly campaign of defamation carried out against Yitzhak Rabin, claiming that he had no "mandate" to negotiate on the basis of "Arab votes." It was manifest in statements by Ariel Sharon that Arabs should not vote on questions of strategic importance to the country. It was manifest in the racist slogans which sullied the election campaign, such as "Bibi or [Ahmed] Tibi," or "The Arabs are with Peres." It has also been manifest in the actions of Baruch Goldstein, Noam Friedman, Ami Popper, Yigal Amir, and a litany of other Jewish terrorists who thrive in an atmosphere charged with xenophobia and hate.

The creeping delegitimation, and the concomitant dehumanization, of 20 percent of Israel's citizenry is part of the price we Israelis are paying for our generation-long occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. This goes far to explain why opponents of the "Greater Israel" concept—erroneously defined, even by Mr. Podhoretz, as the Left—range over Israel's entire political spectrum, united only in their conviction that continued Israeli rule over two million Palestinians constitutes a dangerous strategic liability to Israeli society. Many an army reservist will attest to the brutalizing effects of daily occupation duty, and acknowledge that scenes such as the televised humiliation of Arabs near Ramallah by Israeli border police are far more widespread than is generally reported.

Mr. Podhoretz's strategic observations are a legitimate contribution. But why, for heaven's sake, must he provide a mouthpiece for the racist expletives excreted by the lunatic fringe of Israel's political culture?

SAM SHUBE
Ashdod, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz's assessment of Benjamin Netanyahu's predicament hits the nail on the head. Netanyahu now has no choice but to capitulate on most points, and this because of the seriously weakened position the previous government put Israel into. What Mr. Podhoretz does not stress enough, however, is the viciousness of the Left's attacks on the new Prime Minister. Blatantly and cynically, Israel's leftist Knesset members, news media, businessmen, and even entertainers gave no quarter in what began to look like a conspiracy to bring Netanyahu down and return a leftist government, with no thought for justice or even long-range planning to benefit the country. Always (in my view) short-sighted, leftist Israelis (and not only they) seemed to have no desire to work together for the good of the country's future.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They have one goal: to cause the fall, by any ugly means available, of the country's democratically elected government.

MARILYN MAGEN
Tel Aviv, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

Like Norman Podhoretz, I too have felt that I should have voted for Shimon Peres so that history would have no choice but to lay blame for the upcoming war on the right person. I have even thought that Netanyahu ought to bring Peres into the coalition so as to force him to take some responsibility for what he has wrought. However, living in Israel, I feel safer with Netanyahu at the helm. I am convinced that the Prime Minister is on the right course in following the signed agreements without using the Peres strategy of tactical appeasement. I only hope that Netanyahu has the courage to change his aptly stated "tragic predicament" into a strategic opportunity.

IRA SLOMOWITZ
Kfar Saba, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

I believe, sadly, that Norman Podhoretz's analyses, starting with his "Israel: A Lamentation from the Future" [March 1989], have been consistently correct. In his latest article, however, I think that he is too lenient with Benjamin Netanyahu. There were two points at which Netanyahu could understandably and justifiably have stopped the Oslo process. The first was in September, when the PLO used Israeli guns to kill Israeli soldiers; the second was when the PLO refused to return the killers of the Tzur family. I really think that as soon as Netanyahu took office he should have called a moratorium until the PLO met all its previous commitments. However, I have to assume that he would then have been accused of all kinds of things by the rest of the world. But the two items I just mentioned would, I believe, have been understood.

As a member of the central committee of Israel's National Religious party who campaigned hard for Netanyahu's election, I think I can say with a certain amount of assurance that he fooled us. It was not a mistake to vote for him, since the other option was Peres and my opinion of him matches that of Mr. Podhoretz. But I now believe that he does not have the strength of character required to stand up for the things he believes in. And in the final analysis that is what counts.

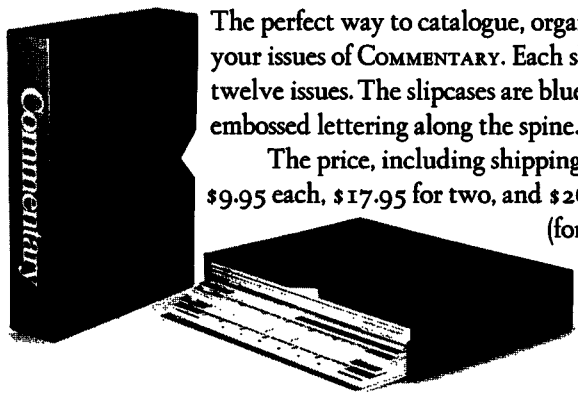
No matter how much territory Israel gives up to Arafat and his terrorists, their ultimate goal remains the same. The question that arises is which particular scenario will bring the inevitable war. Mr. Podhoretz mentions several, but I would like to suggest additional possibilities, all of which could easily lead to an all-out war with the other Arab nations joining in.

1. The PLO eventually declares a state and, actively supported by the other Arab states, starts a war with Israel.

2. Israel allows the PLO to declare a state but disagrees with some other demand, such as having East Jerusalem as its capital or the return of Arab refugees from the wars of 1948 and 1967 to Israel. This could trigger a mini-war like the one that occurred when the Hasmonean tunnel was opened in Jerusalem, which would then escalate.

3. At some point, either before or after the declaration of a PLO state, the various terrorist factions—Hamas, Habash, Ahmed Jibril, George Hawatmah, etc.—begin internecine warfare and turn the areas un-

Preserve Your Issues Of Commentary.



The perfect way to catalogue, organize, and preserve your issues of COMMENTARY. Each slipcase holds up to twelve issues. The slipcases are blue with gold-embossed lettering along the spine.

The price, including shipping and handling is $9.95 each, $17.95 for two, and $26.95 for three (foreign orders please add $3.50 per slipcase for handling).

To order your slipcase send a check payable to COMMENTARY to:
COMMENTARY Slipcase Offer
165 East 56th Street
New York, New York 10022

To order by phone call toll-free 1-800-829-6270 (Monday through Friday, 9AM to 5PM Eastern Time). Mastercard, Visa, and Amex accepted.

Commentary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

der PLO control into a second Lebanon. Israel would have to step in, since it could not allow such a state to exist on its borders.

4. PLO-controlled territory, either before or after the declaration of a state, becomes the base for continuous terrorist attacks against Israel. This would not be tolerated by any Israeli government and Israel would be forced to stop the terrorism.

5. Arafat is assassinated and some other terrorist group takes over. This could develop into another version of Item 4 above. A variation is the assassination or death of King Hussein and the breakdown of the Hashemite regime in Jordan. Then the whole area would blow up, but the one sure thing is that Israel would be the target of one or all or a combination of Arab states and by then it would have already given up much of the strategic territory.

Take your choice of any of the above. They all lead to the same conclusion: that we are headed toward a war for our very existence. One hopes we will win it but, considering the nature of weaponry today compared with 1967, the loss of life may be very large.

I write all this with sadness, but I cannot escape feeling that what I describe is the reality. I hope and pray that my family, friends, and the people of Israel survive with minimal damage. But I fear that the conflict is unavoidable and the results will depend on many things, not the least of which is our spirit and our belief in the righteousness of our cause. About that, I have no doubts.

JAY SHAPIRO
Ginot Shomron, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz's excellent analysis, although correct in every particular, manages to lose the main point. As Mr. Podhoretz makes clear, the Arabs universally regard the "peace process" as a one-sided process of Israeli surrender. Further, as Arafat demonstrated in his September mini-war against Israel, the Arabs are prepared to use violence whenever they feel the surrender is not going fast enough.

By endorsing "Oslo," Netanyahu has boarded the same train to destruction started by Rabin and Peres. What he must do is stop the "peace process" cold. Of course, the price for stopping is to be universally accused of being against peace. This is Netanyahu's true predicament: the salvation of Israel depends on an apparent renunciation of peace.

A true peace can become possible only *after* the Arabs realize that their dream of some day destroying Israel is hopeless and must be abandoned.

ALEXANDER FIRESTONE
Ames, Iowa

TO THE EDITOR:

I recently made a brief visit to Israel. With relatives on both sides of the political spectrum, I had hoped to find out whether they shared any common ground. Upon my return, scrutinizing accumulated newspapers and magazines, comparing what I had heard and seen with what I was reading, I was appalled at the amount of misinformation. Personal bias, reliance on one-sided sources, mainly Palestinian or of the extreme Left, form the core of reporting on Israel. In his article, Norman Podhoretz proves that the hostile media coverage continues unabated.

Reports in both the mainstream media and the Jewish press might lead one to believe that in Israel people are afraid to walk the streets, that Orthodox and secular Israelis are in constant conflict, that no Arabs are visible—one gets an image of a country about to fall apart. Yet I saw prosperous-looking folks, Orthodox, secular, and fezzed gentlemen talking seriously to one another. I saw overcrowded shopping centers, women dressed in the latest fashions. In short: I saw a lively country.

The timely, well-informed, but frightening article by Mr. Podhoretz further restored the balance. He is on firm ground when he describes Arab hatred toward Israel, yet in my conversations with Israelis, I did not discern any apprehension of impending war. People on both the Right and Left told me that the problems are solvable. They also agreed, however, that neither the "peaceniks" nor their opponents are blind to Arab intentions. I returned home believing that Netanyahu will succeed, and that Israelis and not Americans will make the final decisions on peace.

SAMUEL L. TENNENBAUM
West Orange, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

As COMMENTARY readers have come to expect, Norman Podhoretz has offered a logical and cogent analysis of the current state of the Arab-Israeli conflict in "The Tragic Predicament of Benjamin Netanyahu." Unfortunately, I too believe that the Middle East is heading toward another war, one that, for the first time since 1948, all of Israel's neighbors could choose to join.

Like Mr. Podhoretz, I pray that we both are wrong. But contributing to my own pessimism is a set of factors that he did not address. If there is a war, it might be the first that Israel will be forced to fight without the support of the majority of the Jewish community in the Diaspora and particularly in the United States.

I base this prediction on disturbing trends that I have noticed in Jewish communal life within the last decade or so. When I started becoming interested in Jewish communal affairs, individuals who blamed Israel for the absence of peace were kept on the margins of the Jewish community. No mainstream Jewish organization would have ever given them a platform. Today, such people regularly speak from synagogue pulpits and at events sponsored by Federations and other mainstream Jewish organizations. Furthermore, the failure of the Jewish community to come to Israel's defense after the tunnel fiasco would have been unthinkable just twenty years ago.

How did these changes come about? I think that one factor more than others is responsible. Like other institutions in society, Judaism has been "dumbed-down." That is, the standards for what constitutes adequate Jewish literacy have declined significantly. Within the near future, the leadership roles of major Jewish organizations will be assumed by people whose view of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been shaped more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Investor's Business Daily

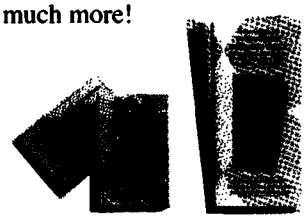
TRY 10 ISSUES...FREE
PLUS 2 FREE GIFTS!!

Keeps You Up On All The Crucial Facts...

One of the most important things you've learned is how vital it is to keep up with current information. That's why we want you to try Investor's Business Daily **FREE for 2 weeks**, no strings attached... to prove to you that it will keep you better informed in the world of business and investing. *Plus you'll also receive 2 valuable FREE gifts:*

"100 Ways To Improve Your Investment Results"

...a 60-minute audio cassette featuring Investor's Business Daily's Founder and Chairman William O'Neil. This tape gives you tips that could help you improve your investment results. You'll also learn how Investor's Business Daily helps you spot and track the "real" growth opportunities in the market...in stocks, mutual funds, options, futures and much more!



"Your Guide To Investor's Business Daily"

This booklet shows you how to find new investment ideas from the unique data available in Investor's Business Daily.

Daily Features:

- ***EXECUTIVE NEWS SUMMARY***

Right on the front page, get a quick glimpse of the day's business news so you'll be informed on the latest in the world of business and how it could affect your investments and decisions.

- ***THE NEW AMERICA***

Read about most of the country's fastest growing, innovative, new companies. Learn who tomorrow's business leaders could be...today.

- ***THE ECONOMY***

Investor's Business Daily's second section front page gives you all the latest economic news from the government and around the world so you're never left out.

- ***INVESTOR'S CORNER***

As an investor, it's always important to keep learning, to educate yourself. In this feature, you'll learn some of the keys to improving your investment skills, and you'll see vital investment variables and techniques explained.

The Most Detailed Financial Information Available...

Read the information for which Investor's Business Daily is best known. Our smart stock tables give you each stock's Relative Price Strength, Earnings Per Share Growth Rank, P/E Ratio, Industry Group Strength, Accumulation/ Distribution Rating, Volume Percent Change...and much more. These tables help you make more informed decisions. And our mutual fund and futures coverage provides you with just what you need.

Saving You Time...

In only minutes of reading time each day, Investor's Business Daily will update you on all of the important business news you'll want to know...from Washington, Wall Street and across the major capitals of the world. Accurately. Concisely.

"Vital News You Can Use Every Business Day"

☑ **YES,** please sign me up for **TWO FREE WEEKS** of Investor's Business Daily. I understand that I will receive a **FREE** audio tape and booklet.

Ship To: ❑ Residence ❑ Business

Name _____ (Last) _____ (First)

Address _____ Apt./Ste. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone (_____) _____

Business Phone (_____) _____

Company _____

Title _____

Mail to: Investor's Business Daily, P.O. Box 66370, Los Angeles, CA 90066-0370

Subscribers within the last 4 months not eligible. This offer is good in the U.S.A. only. JBXD

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by CNN and the *New York Times* than by Hebrew schools or Zionist youth groups. In a few years, leadership will pass to individuals who, unlike me, have no personal memory of the fear that gripped world Jewry in the immediate weeks before the Six-Day War, to say nothing of the events that led to the creation of Israel.

All this leads me to believe that any Israeli government which will refuse to appease Arab tyrants in the name of advancing "peace" will find American Jews giving it only lukewarm support. It is even possible that leaders of prominent Jewish organizations may in some future crisis publicly side with Israel's adversaries.

American Jews may have only limited influence in galvanizing their government's support for a safe and secure Israel. On the other hand, the American government can hardly be expected to have concern for Israel's legitimate security interests if American Jews are not acting as strong advocates for them.

MARTIN S. KROSSEL
Mamaroneck, New York

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

I thank Minister El-Abyad for confirming with his almost ludicrously virulent rhetoric what I said in my article—that even after all these years of living under the regime of a peace treaty with Israel, the Egyptians still show "little sign of diminished animosity toward the Jewish state," and that much the same is true of the rest of the Arab world. This judgment, writes Mr. El-Abyad, is only "to be expected from a crypto-fascist" like me. But is Fouad Ajami, who comes up with an assessment very similar to mine, a crypto-fascist too? In a recent issue of *U.S. News & World Report*, the Lebanese-born Ajami, now a scholar at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and the author of a number of definitive works about the Middle East, flatly states that "There has been no discernible change in the Arab attitudes toward Israel," and goes on as follows:

> The great refusal persists . . . in that "Arab street" of ordinary men and women, among the intellectuals and the writers, and in the professional syndicates. The force of this refusal can be seen in the press of the governments and of the oppositionists, among the secularists and the Islamists alike, in countries that have concluded diplomatic agreements with Israel and those that haven't.

This assessment is confirmed by no less fervent a supporter of Palestinian statehood than the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman. In a report from Casablanca, Friedman acknowledges that "Up to now the Arab intellectual Left, as well as the unions of Arab doctors, lawyers, and writers, have refused to reconcile themselves to Israel, even though their regimes have." But what is most significant about Friedman's piece is that it focuses on Morocco, supposedly the least hostile to Israel of those regimes:

> I just participated in a roundtable discussion with 50 Moroccan professors . . . , and I heard attacks on Israel that were so bitter I finally said to them: "I feel as if I've entered a time warp and woken up at an Arab League meeting in 1960."

According to Ajami, the great refusal "remains fiercest in Egypt," where opposition to Israel "has become part of the ethos and the ideology of the state" as well as of "the gatekeepers of Egyptian culture [who] remain unalterably opposed to normal traffic with Israel." But it would seem from Friedman's account that things are just as bad even in Morocco.

Minister El-Abyad's letter can thus be taken as representative of prevailing sentiment in the Arab world in general and Egypt in particular. It can perhaps also be taken as a demonstration that chutzpah, often considered a distinctively Jewish trait, may now be even more characteristic of Arabs. For this official of a country whose controlled press is full of cartoons reminiscent of Hitler's Germany in their anti-Semitic ugliness, and whose capital has become a leading center for the publication and distribution of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, has the gall to compare *me* to the Nazis.

The Israelis as the Nazis and the Palestinians as the Jews: this disgusting inversion has long been a staple of Arab propaganda, and Minister El-Abyad's continued reliance on it is yet another sign that the "peace process" has failed to work a change of heart in the Arab world. Although he does not come right out and denounce Prime Minister Netanyahu as a Nazi (that honor is reserved for me), he slyly associates Netanyahu with the "convoluted" Final Solution for the Palestinians I allegedly wish to see. Netanyahu, he declares, is planning to hold onto "the Palestinian territories," from which he means to expel the Palestinians; he also intends to maintain control over the Golan Heights.

Well, if Netanyahu harbors any such plans, he has a peculiar way of implementing them. For not only has he withdrawn from Hebron since Minister El-Abyad's letter was written, and not only is he preparing further withdrawals from the West Bank, and not only has he refused to build new settlements there, and not only has he begun hinting that he is now ready to accept a Palestinian state, but he has also been pressing to reopen negotiations based on an exchange of the Golan Heights for a peace treaty with Syria.

All this exposes Minister El-Abyad's letter as a tissue of hysterical lies. And it also makes Hershel Shanks's piece on the little war Arafat started over the opening of the tunnel last September look even more like a "compendium of the conventional wisdom and politically-correct interpretation of the crisis" than it did then. Indeed, so completely have subsequent events borne out my arguments against that interpretation that Mr. Shanks's complacent restatement of it now sounds positively silly.

Thus his lucubrations over Hebron matter even less now than they did before the agreement on Israeli withdrawal was reached—an agreement that he would have known was in the works had he not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been so eager to participate in the worldwide gang-up on Netanyahu. The same eagerness accounts for his carry-on over "closure," or what Minister El-Abyad, who agrees with him on this issue, calls Netanyahu's "starvation policies." Whatever the merits of closure, Mr. Shanks conveniently continues to forget that it was Shimon Peres, not Netanyahu, who closed the borders to Palestinian workers from the territories. Furthermore, as I also pointed out in my article, Netanyahu had already begun opening them at the time Mr. Shanks joined the jackals snapping at his heels (if I may borrow from the title of an article Daniel P. Moynihan once wrote for COMMENTARY about the UN and Israel). This, too, Mr. Shanks persists in ignoring.

Sam Shube thinks that in stressing the Jewish vote in my analysis of Netanyahu's victory in the last election I was being undemocratic and racist. Since I cannot believe that he agrees with the infamous UN resolution condemning Zionism (that is, the right of Jews to self-determination in a Jewish state) as a form of racism, I will refrain from engaging him on the level of principle and confine my response to the level of psephology.

On that level, then, it was obvious that the Arab citizens of Israel overwhelmingly backed the policies of Rabin and then Peres (and in itself alone the fact that they have the vote disposes of the canard that Israel is undemocratic); the only question concerned the sentiments of the Jewish majority. Supporters of the "peace process" assured us that most Israeli Jews approved of Oslo; others said that they were split right down the middle; but no one predicted that they would go by a large margin for Netanyahu. Hence when they did, it told us something significant about the Israeli political climate that we did not know before. I fail to understand why it was racist of me or anyone else to highlight this important reality.

Mr. Shube, like many other people both in Israel and in the world at large, is convinced "that continued Israeli rule over two million Palestinians constitutes a dangerous strategic liability to Israeli society." Well, all these people can relax, since contrary to what they expected, Israel under Netanyahu is well on the way to divesting itself of any such liability. Already all but about 30,000 of those two million Palestinians are being governed by the Palestinian Authority, and given the direction in which Netanyahu is now moving, they will soon be living in a state of their own. At that point we will find out whether Mr. Shube and practically everyone else in the world are right in their belief that this is the road to peace as against those few of us who cannot help seeing it as the prelude to a major war.

Jay Shapiro and Alexander Firestone are among those few, but they contend that Netanyahu could have put a halt to Oslo when he first came into office. I still find it hard, however, to imagine how he could have done this without bringing the world down on his head and losing the support of the American government and even the American Jewish community (about whose current attitudes toward Israel Martin S. Krossel is even more pessimistic than I am). There was simply no way Netanyahu could have stopped or derailed the train that Rabin and Peres had sent speeding full-throttle down the tracks. Nor can I imagine anything he might do now to keep that train from crashing into the terminus of a major war. I sketched out two scenarios of how such a war might break out. Mr. Shapiro adds three more and, as he says, "Take your choice."

Even so, Marilyn Magen, Ira Slomowitz, and Samuel L. Tennenbaum, despite their respective disappointments with Netanyahu, still prefer him to his opponents on the Left and still feel safer with him than they did with Peres. I do too, mainly because Netanyahu has no illusions about the state of mind in the Arab world and is therefore putting a greater emphasis on military preparedness (by, among other things, increasing the defense budget) than a reelected Peres, with visions of a "new Middle East" dancing in his eyes, could have been expected to do. Alas, under the circumstances so vividly described by Fouad Ajami, strengthening Israel's defenses is not likely to deter war, but it can at least ensure that, when war comes, Israel will be ready to fight and in a better position to win.

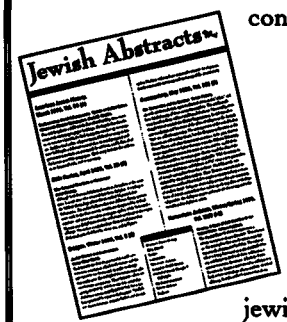
Having repeated all that once again, let me also once again (this time joining with Mr. Shapiro) pray that my analysis is wrong.

Jewish Abstracts

This invaluable newsletter abstracts the best of popular and scholarly Jewish publications.

Ten times a year, Jewish Abstracts provides concise, professional summaries of all the major articles from over forty Jewish and Biblical journals, including *Middle East Quarterly, Judaism, Jewish Studies, Midstream, Commentary and Tikkun.*

Subscribe for $45 a year, $80 for two years, or contact us for a sample issue.



Jewish Abstracts
2565 Broadway, #140
New York, NY 10025
212-665-5233
jewish-abs@wwonline-ny.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Federalism

TO THE EDITOR:

I read the lucid and cogent article by David B. Rivkin, Jr. and Lee A. Casey, "Federalism (Cont'd.)" [December 1996], with interest and sympathy.

I served as law clerk to Justice Louis D. Brandeis in the 1935-36 Supreme Court term. It is inconceivable to me that he would have differed from the position of the authors. Moreover, to turn to an issue of enormous concern to me, Justice Brandeis would surely have supported the single-sex status of Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and also of the Citadel, responding not only to his belief in states' rights but also to his identification with the South. I testified by deposition on behalf of the single-sex status of VMI, and was cross-examined at enormous length by lawyers from the New York ACLU, who were also attacking the Citadel.

The provincialism vis-à-vis the traditional South of Justice Stephen Breyer and other members of the Court majority in the VMI case would seem, in the light of the position of Messrs. Rivkin and Casey, a flagrant attack on responsible federalism.

It goes without saying that I do not believe that all the states will do a marvelous job in matters now redelegated to them, but, as the article makes clear, the authors do not believe that the purpose of the Supreme Court is to save us from ourselves or, rather, it should do so only in cases of the most clear-cut interferences with liberty and with freedom of speech.

DAVID RIESMAN
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

David B. Rivkin, Jr. and Lee A. Casey mention the Supreme Court's requirement that all state laws must, at a minimum, be rationally related to a proper governmental purpose in order to be constitutional. This rule, which they call "uncontroversial," is predicated on the Fourteenth Amendment's equal-protection clause. Unlike the authors, however, I believe that this doctrine is not only controversial but dead wrong.

Messrs. Rivkin and Casey also cite the Tenth Amendment, which says that those powers which the Constitution does not give to the federal government or prohibit to the states—in other words, powers simply not referred to at all—are reserved (exclusively) to the states. If not expressly prohibited, in fact, states can generally make laws even on matters that are addressed by federal law (though, because of the Constitution's supremacy clause, in cases of conflict state laws will succumb). Aside from these restrictions, however, it was intended that the states be free to legislate without limits, as the Tenth Amendment makes perfectly clear.

Nor was the equal-protection clause intended to change all this. Considering that it was part of the post-Civil War amendments, it is nearly impossible to believe that it was understood to address anyone but blacks and perhaps racial groups generally. For example, can anyone besides liberal judicial activists say with a straight face that those who enacted the equal-protection clause in 1868 had the protection of homosexuals in mind?

But even if I were to concede that the equal-protection clause applied to homosexuals, as the Court recently held in *Romer*, and, based on other cases, to women and aliens (and the list goes on), it would still seem absurd that it was intended to give the judiciary the power to strike down *any* state law which lacks a "proper governmental purpose"—without regard to the limitations actually found in the Constitution, and therefore based ultimately on nothing but the subjective politics of individual judges disguised as law.

TODD BANK
East Meadow, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

In their article, "Federalism (Cont'd.)," David B. Rivkin, Jr. and Lee A. Casey have illuminated a position that is highly critical of federal regulation. Surely federal regulation needs to be evaluated carefully and limited to situations where it is needed. Yet their broadside attack on the constitutional basis of federal regulation, in my view, goes too far.

First, it bears noting that virtually all civil-rights legislation and the regulation under it rest on the commerce clause. The famous case of *Heart of Atlanta Motel* established the constitutional foundation for the 1964 Civil Rights Act. There have been few pieces of legislation in our nation's history that have been more important in shaping attitudes and practices toward minorities. The approach of Messrs. Rivkin and Casey calls into question not only the statutes they mention but the whole host of anti-discrimination laws that are so fundamental to the modern American legal landscape. It is not realistic to think that states will substitute consistent standards in the area of civil rights for those that have evolved under federal statutes based on the commerce clause.

In addition, their approach supports, perhaps ironically, a highly activist judicial temperament. Yet members of Congress are elected; federal judges are not. For courts to take an aggressive view toward the federal commerce power, as suggested by the authors, would move them to the forefront of social policy-making. We should not want courts striking down a vast range of regulatory laws that Congress has passed.

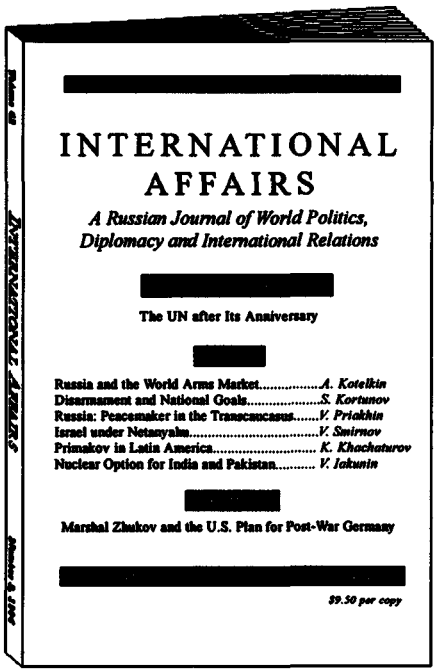
Moreover, the authors' reliance on the presumed original intent of the Framers raises serious methodological questions. We want to know what the Framers' intent was when they adopted provisions of the Constitution, but why should we deem a particular historical attitude in 1787 to be the definitive basis for modern constitutional interpretation? This question opens up the entire debate about a dynamic or living Constitution versus a more static Constitution.

This is not the place fully to develop a theory and argument in favor of a living view of constitutional law. The key point is that conditions have changed since 1787. Courts in many areas of constitutional law have recognized this as they have evolved meanings for key provisions.

The authors have written a provocative piece, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Journal of Russia's Foreign Policy


INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy and International Relations
The UN after Its Anniversary
Russia and the World Arms Market ... A. Kotelkin
Disarmament and National Goals ... S. Kortunov
Russia: Peacemaker in the Transcaucasus ... V. Priakhin
Israel under Netanyahu ... V. Smirnov
Primakov in Latin America ... K. Khachaturov
Nuclear Option for India and Pakistan ... V. Iakunin
Marshal Zhukov and the U.S. Plan for Post-War Germany
$9.50 per copy

EDITED BY BORIS PIADYSHEV. BIMONTHLY, ISSN 0130-9641

Get the *Russian* side of the story for a change...

Articles in recent issues have included:

- On the Eve of the 21st Century by *Ye. Primakov*
- Moderation in the National Idea by *D. Baluev*
- Fundamentlism in Islam by *I. Sevostianov*
- Russia in Search of Allies by *S. Kortunov*
- Prospects for a Middle East Settlement by *A. Shein*
- Israel under Netanyahu by *V. Smirnov*
- Chernobyl: Ten Years Later by *Zh. Medvedev*
- NATO's Expansion: Security Issues by *M. Gareev*
- Terrorism in the World by *A. Zmeevski, V. Tarabrin*
- Archives: Khrushchev's Secret Message to JFK

and much more...

Known for its close ties with the Russian Foreign Ministry, ***International Affairs*** offers unique insight and analysis of the major foreign policy and security problems facing Russia and the other countries of the former Soviet Union today, and presents a variety of interpretations of world and domestic events by leading Russian policy makers and commentators. ***Indispensable research tool for scholars, analysts and students of Russia and CIS.*** Most back issues are available.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Individuals: US $39.00; Elsewhere $69.00
Institutions: US $129.00; Elsewhere $139.00

BACK ISSUES

Individuals: $12.00; Institutions: $25.00

Send your orders to:

East View Publications, Inc.
3020 Harbor Lane North
Minneapolis, MN 55447, USA
Tel: (612)550-0961
Fax: (612)559-2931
Toll-free: 1-800-477-1005
Email: eastview@eastview.com

- ☐ Please start my one-year subscription
- ☐ Enclosed is my check or money order
- ☐ Charge to my Visa, Mastercard or AmEx

Acct. No. _____

Exp. Date _____

Send to

Name _____

Company _____

Address _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that is all to the good. We do need a healthy broad debate about federal and state power.

THOMAS O. SARGENTICH
Co-Director, Program on Law and Government
American University
Washington, D.C.

DAVID B. RIVKIN, JR. and LEE A. CASEY write:

We appreciate the responses to our article. David Riesman's kind letter points out an excellent example of how the modern Supreme Court has "reinterpreted" the Constitution's text, changing its meaning in order to strike down institutions that were unquestioned by its Framers but which are now unfashionable among the "enlightened." That Justice Brandeis might have agreed with our analysis is both flattering and a fair gauge of how far the judiciary has come in the last 60 years. On matters of judicial restraint, Justice Brandeis, whose politics were of the liberal variety, was the Antonin Scalia of his time—or, more appropriately—the conservative Justice Scalia can fairly be characterized as the Brandeis of our own.

We obviously share Todd Bank's concern that judges not make policy for the states in the guise of upholding the Fourteenth Amendment's due-process and equal-protection clauses. We cannot, however, agree with his interpretation of the equal-protection clause's reach. Although that provision was occasioned by the need to protect recently freed slaves from Reconstructed state governments, neither its text nor the evidence of its original meaning suggests that its protection was limited to the freedmen, or to their descendants. The equal-protection clause guarantees all "persons" "equal protection of the laws." The battles, of course, are fought over what "equal protection of the laws" means.

Finally, in response to Thomas O. Sargentich, we believe that the ends cannot justify the means. Much civil-rights legislation has, indeed, been based on the commerce clause. Where racial discrimination genuinely affects interstate commerce, Congress can properly use its commerce power to correct it. A hotel's refusal to serve black customers, for example, can impede the free flow of goods and services in interstate commerce, and congressional action is entirely appropriate. That some civil-rights legislation might not survive scrutiny under the original meaning of the commerce clause does not, and cannot, justify Congress in ignoring that meaning, and in usurping power the Constitution denied it.

More broadly, the approach we advocate—that Congress, the courts, and the President should all limit themselves to the power granted them by the Constitution and its amendments in accordance with the document's original meaning—does not promote an "activist" judiciary. Judicial "activism" should be assessed by the quality of the judicial act—in making law as opposed to interpreting and applying it—rather than by the quantity of unconstitutional legislation invalidated. When Congress legislates in the constitutionally defined sphere of federal authority, the courts must suffer its laws, however wrongheaded they think the result. When Congress exceeds its constitutional power, the courts may not permit its legislation, regardless of how good they think the result.

The Framers purposefully eschewed an unwritten constitution subject to change by accretion and evolution over time in favor of a written constitution that can be changed only by amendment. Courts are not bound by the personal, subjective intent of the Framers, but they are bound by the meaning of the words and concepts the Framers used at the time the Constitution was written and ratified. There is no contemporary evidence—not one letter, paper, pamphlet, or broadsheet—indicating that the Constitution's Framers and ratifiers understood it to give the judiciary the power constantly to redraft that document. The courts that have, in Mr. Sargentich's phrase, "evolved meanings for key provisions" different from the original meaning were engaged not in a process of constitutional explication but in a quiet coup d'état.

The City Opera

TO THE EDITOR:

I write in response to Terry Teachout's article on the New York City Opera ["Not the Metropolitan Opera," December 1996], of which I was chairman for twelve years and on whose board I still sit. City Opera has sold more than 200,000 tickets almost every year during the last few decades, no matter who was in charge or what nonstandard repertory was favored. Though this is a third as many tickets as the Metropolitan Opera, it is more than any other American opera company and more than many of the major European companies.

It seems that very few people attend both the City Opera and the Met and thus it would appear that City Opera's patrons are still those envisaged by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia: people who love opera but are unable to afford Met tickets.

So there are absolutely no grounds for Mr. Teachout's questioning the City Opera's existence. And whether or not it performs more American operas, as he proposes, will probably have nothing to do with the company's box-office or its long-term health.

ROBERT W. WILSON
New York City

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

Robert W. Wilson's pivotal role in keeping City Opera afloat is well known and much admired—by me among many others—and his letter points up an essential distinction between the roles of the critic and what, for want of a better word, I shall call the insider.

The conductor George Szell summed it up neatly (if one-sidedly) when he said, "For the kibitzer, no stakes are too high." Every critic is in this sense a kibitzer: he has no personal stake in the institutions about which he writes. Hence, he is free to hold those institutions to standards which are not always relevant to the practical problem of getting the curtain up every night—a problem with which insiders like Mr. Wilson are by definition mainly concerned.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Having worked in the world of music, I think I have a better grasp of the practical side of things than do many other critics, and I try consciously to write criticism that is informed by my professional experience: I would never recommend that an institution adopt artistic policies which, however pleasing to me personally, would inevitably bring about its demise. But I also believe that, in the end, it is my job to side with ideals, not institutions, which means I sometimes find myself complaining about performances that give pleasure to large numbers of other people.

I notice that Mr. Wilson says nothing in his letter about the merits of City Opera's artistic policies during his tenure as chairman. Instead, he states flatly that the fact that the company sells more than 200,000 tickets a year means I have "absolutely no grounds" for questioning its existence. If this means he is applying a market test to the "success" of City Opera, I can only say I am applying a different test: in art, more may not necessarily mean worse, but neither does it necessarily mean better, and for me, City Opera's existence can only be justified by the quality of the performances it gives. I do not think a low-priced opera performance that is artistically unsatisfactory does anybody any good, least of all a novice operagoer who does not know the difference. (I will pass over in silence the question of whether City Opera's inability to sell enough tickets to put it on a sound financial footing negates the validity of a totally market-based analysis of its artistic policies.)

The fact that Mr. Wilson and I are ultimately talking about two different things is thrown into still sharper relief by his observation that "whether or not more American operas are performed . . . will probably have nothing to do with the company's box-office or its long-term health." No doubt he is right on the first count. But to me, the health of City Opera has at least as much to do with whether it is doing the right thing artistically—and I believe deeply that this means a repertory that includes American opera.

Uses of Biography

TO THE EDITOR:

Initially we chose to ignore Gary Saul Morson's review of our book, *The Bones of Berdichev: The Life and Fate of Vasily Grossman* [Books in Review, September 1996]. But Joshua Rubenstein's letter defending his own biography of Ilya Ehrenburg, which was jointly reviewed by Mr. Morson, and Mr. Morson's reply [Letters from Readers, January] have prompted this response.

Accused by Mr. Morson of whitewashing Ehrenburg's various sins and ignoring evidence that did not suit his purpose, Rubenstein adopts an intriguing tactic. He takes Mr. Morson to task for missing an alleged fault in our book! Eager to set the record straight, he then spends two-thirds of his letter attacking *The Bones of Berdichev*.

In his reply to Rubenstein's complaints, Mr. Morson confesses with disarming candor that a statement in his review about the issue that upsets Rubenstein (the role of Ilya Ehrenburg in the creation of *The Black Book*) "represents my paraphrase of the Garrards' account, not my own view of the subject. Apart from the two books under review, I have no information worth mentioning. . . ."

Setting aside the fact that Mr. Morson failed to paraphrase our treatment of *The Black Book* fully and accurately, we are surely entitled to ask what value Mr. Morson's view might have, since he has "no information worth mentioning" about it?

May we also correct his effort to lump our book together with Rubenstein's as examples of the "compromises biographers make to justify the lives they narrate"? In his review, Mr. Morson does devote several paragraphs to the compromises in Rubenstein's biography. But none of this has anything to do with our treatment of Vasily Grossman. Later in the review, indeed, Mr. Morson contradicts his earlier statement by calling *The Bones of Berdichev* "the story of a man who spends much of his life atoning for his disgraceful acts." He cannot have it both ways. Either we are guilty of "compromises" or we have laid out "disgraceful acts."

As any reader of our

Business with Israel? Investing in Israel?
Visit the Israeli Investor Network™
World Wide Web Site
http://www.iin18.com

Write to us for free information and a free issue of:

THE GIZA INVESTMENT LETTER—
ISRAEL'S BEST SOURCE OF NEWS AND ANALYSIS OF ISRAELI SECURITIES

ISRAELI INVESTOR NETWORK,™ INC.
165 W. PUTNAM AVENUE
GREENWICH, CT. 06830, USA
OR FAX YOUR REQUEST TO: 914-937-7153

POSITION AVAILABLE

Advertising Sales Representative

Send letter and résumé to

Allan Diamond
COMMENTARY
165 E. 56th Street
New York, NY 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

book can confirm, *The Bones of Berdichev* demonstrates that Grossman was quite different from Ehrenburg (a man whom we admire in many respects). Here again Mr. Morson fails to paraphrase accurately. Grossman's faults were those of omission rather commission. He did not spend a lifetime cooperating with the Stalinist regime, but he was intimidated on moral issues that troubled him deeply. Part of his continuing interest as a writer derives from the ruthless honesty and artistic integrity with which he examined his own experiences, including his failure to act, in his novels and short stories.

We can agree to disagree with Mr. Morson on a number of issues since his opinions are (as he confesses) not based on a close familiarity with the facts set forth and analyzed in our book. However, we do take exception to his notion that we portray Jews, including victims of the Holocaust, in too favorable a light.

As non-Jews we view accusations of philo-Semitism from Gentiles as a kind of backhanded compliment—and our book has provoked several such "compliments." It is harder to know what to make of accusations from a Jew without any professional background in the subject at hand who argues that we present too sympathetic a picture of Jewish suffering at the hands of czarist authorities and later of the Nazis and local collaborators during the Holocaust.

Mr. Morson dismisses as special pleading what are in fact documentary accounts of mistreatment and massacres, drawn from newly opened Soviet archives. He charges us with granting the victims a "morally privileged position." This sentiment and the style in which it is expressed echo the bloodless world of modern literary theory, in which Mr. Morson seems so much at home.

Whatever Mr. Morson's motives, we make no apologies for expressing sympathy for the innocent men, women, children, and babes-in-arms at Berdichev and elsewhere in Nazi-occupied Soviet territory who were humiliated, robbed, and butchered for no reason other than that they were Jewish.

As for Mr. Morson's claim that we "apologize for anything and everything Jews have ever done," this is an unconscionable statement and a malicious attempt to devalue our book and the terrible suffering it documents. The claim patently misrepresents our views and those of Grossman as set forth in *The Bones of Berdichev*. We tried only to stay faithful to Vasily Grossman's published works and to his humanitarian spirit in urging the treatment of Jews as people—no more, no less.

JOHN AND CAROL GARRARD
University of Arizona
Tucson Arizona

GARY SAUL MORSON writes:

John and Carol Garrard claim that in my review of their book I accused them of portraying Jews, "including victims of the Holocaust, in too favorable a light." According to them, I wrote that in *The Bones of Berdichev* they "present too sympathetic a picture of Jewish suffering at the hands of czarist authorities and later of the Nazis." In the same vein, they now assert that they "make no apologies for expressing sympathy for the innocent men, women, children, and babes-in-arms . . . who were humiliated, robbed, and butchered for no reason other than that they were Jewish."

What prompts these egregious characterizations, which come close to accusing me of callousness toward Jewish suffering? Their comments refer to a single sentence in my review, which reads:

> Unfortunately, too, [the Garrards] tend to suggest rather facilely that the suffering of Jews has given them a morally privileged position, and to apologize for anything and everything that Jews have ever done.

That is all.

Surely, to suggest that not all Jews are morally pure does not mean that they deserve the suffering that has been inflicted upon them. In writing that sentence, I had in mind a number of passages in the Garrards' book that seem to me questionable in terms of both judgment and ethics. To take just one example: in their discussion of the Russian civil war, they mention a Jewish Red Army soldier who, in retribution for anti-Semitism, would bayonet Ukrainians *en masse* in a blind fury. Their comment: "naturally enough, on occasion Jewish Red Army officers sought revenge for the brutal murder of their own loved ones." They might have spared us that "naturally enough."

The Garrards find it a direct contradiction ("he cannot have it both ways") to say that a biography can admit to disgraceful acts on the part of its subject and still be compromised by an overly apologetic treatment. But this is not necessarily a contradiction, since everything depends on how one presents those acts, and what story they fit into. There are, in fact, many biographies of political and literary figures that concede faults only to downplay their significance.

In my reply to Joshua Rubenstein, I wrote that, apart from what was presented in his and the Garrards' book, "I have no information worth mentioning on the creation of *The Black Book*," about which the two studies disagree. For the Garrards, this admission shows that I lack the credentials to review their book: "His opinions are (as he confesses) not based on a close familiarity with the facts set forth and analyzed in our book." Confesses? Because I do not know about the composition of *The Black Book*, I apparently do not know anything else about the subject. I would have thought, in any event, that adjudicating between two scholars' accounts of an incident is a topic for another scholarly article, hardly the function of a review.

Finally, although I have published nine books and some 50 articles on Russian literature and thought, including on Russian anti-Semitism, I am described as "a Jew without any professional background in the subject at hand."

The Garrards' letter is filled with *ad-hominem* attacks, but perhaps the most telling comment occurs at the end; my review, they say, is "a malicious attempt to devalue our book and the terrible suffering it docu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ments." Here, the Garrards seem to be equating criticism of their book with lack of sympathy for the millions killed by the Nazis. I suppose it might be possible to imagine a more cynical use of the Holocaust, but it would be difficult.

Ukraine

TO THE EDITOR:

Angelo M. Codevilla's assertion in response to letters by Ukrainian ambassador Yuri Shcherbak and myself [Letters from Readers, January 1997] that "in May 1996 the U.S. government officially protested to the government of Ukraine over its sale of SS-18 missile components to China" is simply untrue. The U.S. government did not officially make such a protest either in May 1996 or at any other time. The National Security Council (NSC) has advised us that no such official protest was made. Additionally, the government of Ukraine has denied the existence of any government committee to conduct sales of strategic goods to Libya or of any agreement to sell missile technology to China, as Mr. Codevilla also asserts.

Due to a speculative CIA report, the U.S. Foreign Operations Law for Fiscal Year 1997 includes the following language regarding the earmarking of funds for Ukraine:

> Funds appropriated under this heading may not be made available for the government of Ukraine if the President determines and reports to the Committee on Appropriations that the government of Ukraine is engaged in military cooperation with the government of Libya.

Similar language appears with reference to the other independent states of the former Soviet Union. This "caveat" represents circumspection on the part of Senator Mitch McConnell, the author of the bill, rather than the possession of any evidence of illicit dealings on the part of Ukraine. To date, President Clinton has no grounds for making such a determination.

ASKOLD S. LOZYNSKYJ
Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

ANGELO M. CODEVILLA writes:

I do not know who on the NSC staff said what to Askold S. Lozynskyj, but then-Defense Secretary William J. Perry said publicly to the *Washington Times* on May 21, 1996 that the U.S. government had made protests to Ukraine. Let me quote from the *Times* story:

> The United States has strongly protested China's efforts to buy SS-18 missile technology from Russia and Ukraine, Defense Secretary William J. Perry said in an interview yesterday. . . . "I will assure you that there have been communications at high levels both to the Russian and Ukrainian governments. The demarche to the Russians and the Ukrainians was very specific. . . ."

Later in the same news story the Secretary was again quoted on the issue of transferring SS-18 components or technology to China, an action which he asserted would violate U.S. Russian strategic-arms treaties as well as the 31-nation Missile Technology Control Regime:

> We are adamantly opposed to any such transfer, and we are being very direct with both the Russians and the Ukrainians on this issue, since a good bit of the SS-18 technology is made in Ukraine.

In the normal course of things, a Secretary of Defense issues warnings of this nature only when he knows something is happening, or has already happened.

In any event, it was on the basis of facts such as the ones I cited in my original article, "Defenseless America" [September 1996], and not on the basis of any "speculative CIA report," that Congress, in the U.S. Foreign Operations Law for 1997, vehemently discouraged money for Ukraine. This provision did not come about as the result of a single Senator's "circumspection"; such language is adopted by Congress only after official consultation and advice, and on the basis of knowledge such as that which Secretary Perry felt strongly enough about to speak out in public.

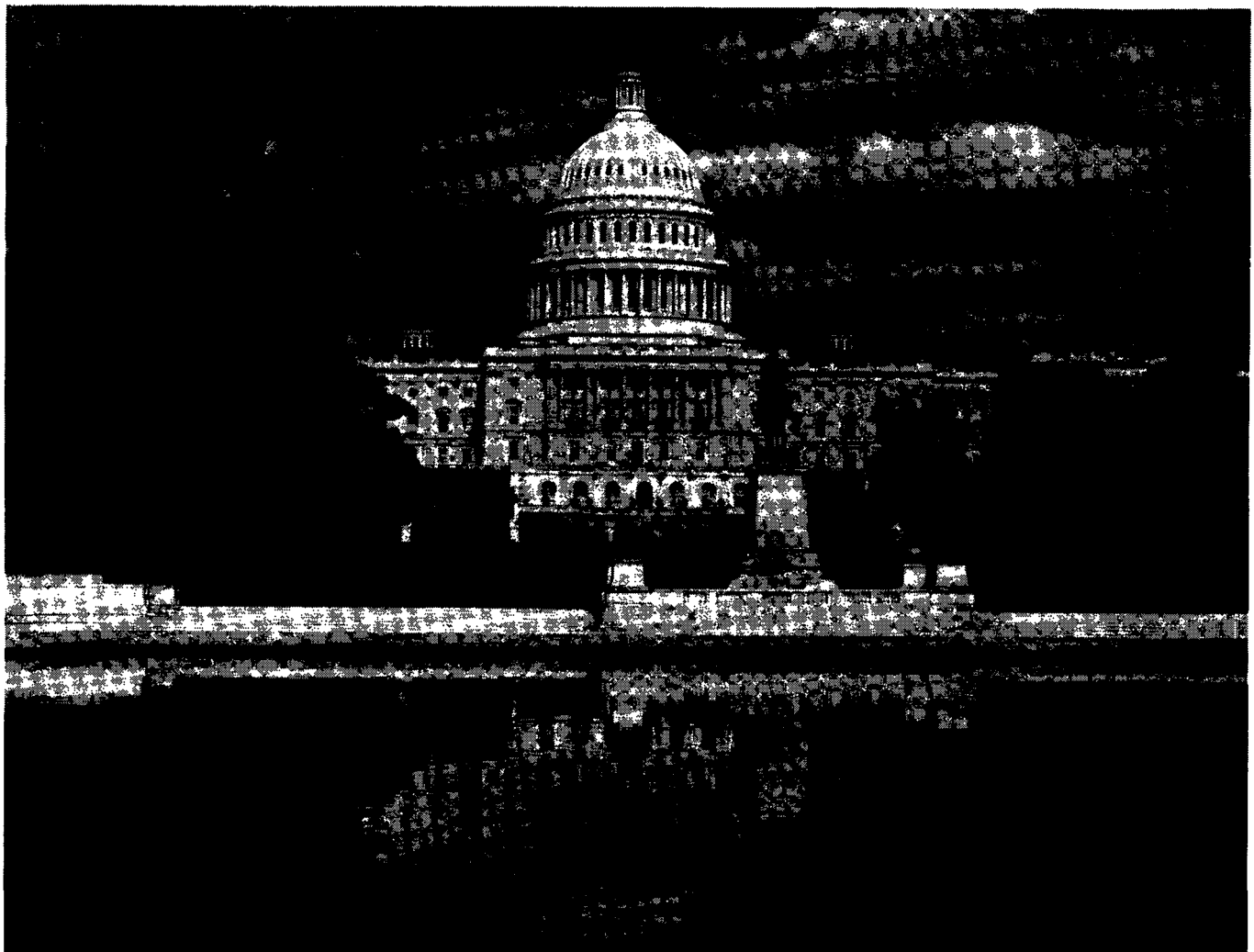
A Classic

TO THE EDITOR:

Joseph Epstein's story, "Don Juan Zimmerman" [January], is exceptionally moving and beautiful. It deserves to be widely acknowledged as a classic example of the short story.

P. DAVID HORNIK
Jerusalem, Israel

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



If you knew what they know, would you do what they do?

More than any other single force on earth, America's foreign policy will determine what kind of world we and our children live in.

And every one of us can influence that policy. That's what the nonprofit, nonpartisan Foreign Policy Association is all about: working to develop the kind of informed public opinion that will help our government make enlightened, responsible foreign policy decisions.

Last year alone, more than 250,000 Americans across the nation—in discussion groups, classrooms and community centers—participated in our *Great Decisions* program.

The *Great Decisions* book provides objective background on eight key foreign policy issues. Discussions help you form your views; you express them on opinion ballots, which FPA presents to Washington officials.

FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION 1918

To find out more, call us at (212) 481-8100. Or write to Foreign Policy Association, Department A, 470 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016. Donations are tax deductible.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commentary
April 1997

"Lolita," My Mother-in-Law, the Marquis de Sade, and Larry Flynt

Norman Podhoretz

NOT LONG ago, the Library of America put out a beautiful new three-volume edition of the novels and memoirs of Vladimir Nabokov,[1] and I decided to seize upon it as a convenient occasion for reacquainting myself with his work. Which explains why I happened to be reading *Lolita* on the very day a story by Nina Bernstein appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* that cast a horrifying new light on Nabokov's masterpiece. It also brought memories to the surface that had long been buried, and simultaneously forced me into rethinking a number of questions I had up till then considered fairly well resolved. As I was going through this difficult process, I was given a few more pushes by Milos Forman's movie, *The People vs. Larry Flynt*, and two recently published books, Roger Shattuck's *Forbidden Knowledge*[2] and Rochelle Gurstein's *The Repeal of Reticence*.[3] By the time I was through, my peace of mind had been so disturbed that I was left wishing that those old memories and those settled questions had been allowed to remain in their contentedly slumberous state.

NINA BERNSTEIN's story concerned the unearthing of a list of thousands of children "whose names were secretly compiled, annotated, and stored with a cache of child pornography on a computer used by a convicted pedophile in a Minnesota state prison" just north of Minneapolis. Minneapolis! The mere mention of it in this lurid context prodded the first of those long inert memories back to life. It featured my late mother-in-law, Rose Rosenthal, who in a sociologically unusual wrinkle of American Jewish history was born almost exactly a century ago in Minneapolis's "twin city," St. Paul, and lived there until her death in 1972.

A loyal Jew and a fierce Zionist, Rose Rosenthal was in all other respects so typical a Midwesterner that a character modeled on her would have been entirely at home in one of the novels of her fellow Minnesotan, Sinclair Lewis. Before meeting her, I had thought I understood—precisely from reading Lewis and many others—what the word "bourgeois" meant, but I soon began to realize that I had never known the half of it. After all, where would I—born and bred in a Brooklyn slum in the 1930's and then moving in the years after World War II from college and graduate school into the milieu of the New York intellectuals—ever have had a chance to en-

NORMAN PODHORETZ, *a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, was the editor-in-chief of* COMMENTARY *for 35 years and is now its editor-at-large.*

[1] Edited by Brian Boyd. Vol. I, *Novels and Memoirs 1941-1951*, 710 pp.; Vol. II, *Novels 1955-1962*, 904 pp.; Vol. III, *Novels 1969-1974*, 825 pp.; $35.00 each volume.

[2] St. Martin's, 369 pp. $26.95. Reviewed by J. Bottum in COMMENTARY, December 1996.

[3] Hill and Wang, 357 pp., $27.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

counter a true member of that much-derided species in the flesh?

Obviously I had run into many middle-class people, but such a battering had the "bourgeois" world view taken over the past several decades that they had either given up on it themselves or had lost the nerve to exhibit any of the traditional stigmata of their moral and cultural background. None of them, for example, would have risked appearing so unsophisticated as to condemn a movie star like Ingrid Bergman for flaunting an adulterous affair and then bearing a child out of wedlock. But my mother-in-law did, loudly, and with total confidence in the rightness of her judgment.

Intransigently provincial as she was, the only moral standards she recognized as valid were the rigidly puritanical standards prevailing in the St. Paul of her day. Any violations of those standards outraged her, and the more they were violated by the outside world, the more she felt confirmed in her commitment to them. So far as she was concerned, the rest of the country, and especially New York, was going to hell, while St. Paul, and the Midwest generally, remained an enclave of goodness and purity and rectitude. But surely, I would protest, the things that appalled her must be happening out there, too. "No," she would reply with a stubborn set of the jaw, "not in our part of the country."

Not in our part of the country: it was those words that started ringing in my head as I read the *Times* story about the inmate with "multiple convictions for child sexual assault" sitting in the Lino Lakes Correctional Facility, just a stone's throw away from St. Paul. There, in that prison, this monster had free and easy access to a state-of-the art computer and a modem, and using that equipment he had compiled a huge data base mostly of little girls between three and twelve for circulation on the Internet to other pedophiles.

The names came not from the Internet itself but from local newspapers all over Minnesota, to which he also had free and easy access through exchange subscriptions with a prison newspaper (founded, in a piquant detail, by members of the Jesse James gang in 1887 and still going strong). By combing through birthday announcements and such features as "Citizens of Tomorrow," he was able not only to collect names for his data base but also to embellish it with many helpful pointers.

Thus, the *Times* reports, the children "appear by age and location . . . in dated entries that . . . include personal details written as 'latchkey kids,' 'speech difficulties,' 'cute,' and 'Little Ms. pageant winner.'" Even more to the point of my ancient argument with my mother-in-law:

> The towns where the children live are alphabetized and coded by map coordinates, as though on a road atlas to the American Midwest. Most are hamlets in northern Minnesota, places born of the railroad in the last century and bypassed by the highway in this one.

Not in our part of the country indeed.

TO BE sure, even in the late 1950's, when I first met her, my mother-in-law was wrong and I was right about life in places like St. Paul. Premarital sex, adultery, illegitimacy, homosexuality, and—yes—pedophilia were by no means entirely unknown there. (In the year of her death, the very pedophile who would later use a computer to locate potential victims did the same thing with the more primitive tool of a notebook, and was caught and then convicted for the first time after breaking into a home in St. Paul itself.) Such goings on, however, were sufficiently rare, or anyway well enough hidden, so that a novel like *Peyton Place* could create a huge sensation merely by revealing their presence in small-town America.

This revelation, like so many others before it in the literature and polemics emanating from the higher reaches of American culture, carried the additional satisfaction of confirming the charge of hypocrisy that invariably accompanied attacks on the moral professions of the middle class. But those who so loved to yell "hypocrite" at the bourgeoisie always seemed to forget that hypocrisy, being "the tribute vice pays to virtue," testifies to the commanding power of the standards being violated, not to their weakness or fraudulence.

As for my mother-in-law, I would bet my life that she was no hypocrite and that she practiced what she preached. But she was without any question a great denier, who simply refused to see what she did not wish to see or to know what she did not wish to know. In thus adopting what amounted to a private form of censorship, she withheld even de-facto recognition from anyone or anything that disrupted or challenged the moral order in which she believed with all her heart.

There were millions upon millions like her in America, and their practice of private censorship was mirrored and reinforced by the law. And if

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this dual system did not work well enough to wall off their "part of the country" entirely from the "bad examples" being set by my part of the country, it did afford at least some measure of protection. Certainly it is hard to imagine the Minnesota of my mother-in-law's day becoming, of all things, the center of a network of child molesters.

Those walls, wherever they were built in America, have all long since been blasted to smithereens, as I first realized when, on a visit to Salt Lake City in the early 1970's, I discovered pornographic books and magazines being sold openly in a drugstore right across the street from the Mormon Temple. It amazed me that even a city dominated by Mormons had given up trying to defend itself against the tidal wave of pornography which had followed in the wake of a series of increasingly liberal court decisions. True, those decisions had still left a bit of room for restrictive local ordinances, but it had evidently become too troublesome and too expensive for local prosecutors to take advantage of them. For all practical purposes, then, the fight against censorship had already been won.

As a young literary critic and as an editor, I had taken part in that fight. It was not a very large part, consisting only in the writing and publishing of a few articles, the delivering of a few lectures, and on one occasion the giving of testimony in an obscenity trial. But this brings me to another cluster of long-dormant memories that rereading *Lolita* in conjunction with Nina Bernstein's story in the *Times* has prodded back to life.

One of these is of a talk I gave in defense of pornography at Bard College in the late 50's. In those days I never lectured from a prepared text and the notes on which I relied have gone the way of all notes, so that now, after nearly 40 years, I am a bit hazy as to what exactly I said. But as best as I can reconstruct it, the case I made in defense of pornography began with a literary analysis. Conceding that the purpose of pornography was to arouse lust, I argued that there was no reason why this should be considered any less legitimate than the arousal of such other emotions and passions as anger, sorrow, pity, and so on. Like any other literary genre, pornography could be well written or badly written, and the appeal to lustful thoughts and impulses could be artfully managed or unskillfully and crudely done.

I believe I then went on to claim that, aesthetic considerations apart, pornography had a value all its own. It represented a kind of utopian fantasy of pure sex, sex liberated from consequence and into unalloyed ecstasy ("pornotopia," as my old college friend, Steven Marcus of Columbia, would later call it in a book on pornography in the Victorian era). And this fantasy demanded and deserved recognition for the role it played in attacking—I cringe at the thought that such words ever came out of my mouth, even when I was young—the stifling proprieties and unhealthy repressions of bourgeois society.

The students in the audience at Bard (a "progressive" college, and as such already in tune with the spirit of the 60's to come) loved it. They applauded wildly when I was through, and their questions in the discussion period were all requests for more of the same. But then Professor Heinrich Blücher, whom I knew slightly through his wife Hannah Arendt, raised his hand. Though overshadowed by her growing fame as a political philosopher, this obscure German scholar was rumored to be working on a (never-to-be-completed) monumental History of Everything that would put her work to shame; and Hannah herself had told me more than once that he possessed one of the great minds of our age. With this reputation adding to the fearsomeness of his aristocratic Prussian bearing, he jumped to his feet and shouted at the top of his lungs in the heaviest possible German accent, "You are taking all the *fun* out of sex!"

I needed a small pause to shake off this stinging left hook, but after a second or two I recovered myself enough to counterpunch with the insistence that it was not necessary for sex to remain hidden in order to be fun. "But," he shot—or rather shouted—back, "don't you know that pornography soon becomes *boring*?" To this I replied that I knew no such thing, and that I was hard put to take people at face value who said they were bored by pornography. Embarrassed, yes; ashamed, yes; repelled, yes; disgusted, yes; but the claim of boredom seemed to me an affectation of superiority to something which only a saint could be superior to.

I now realize that Heinrich Blücher, who had probably grown sated with pornography as a young man steeped in the sexually unbridled culture of Weimar Germany, knew what he was talking about. But unlike the America of today—which has exceeded even Weimar in sexual license and licentiousness, and where pornography can be piped into any home at the click of a mouse or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the flick of a television remote or the activation of a VCR[4]—in the America of the 50's there was still very little of it around. In the world in which I lived, it was easy enough to borrow copies of *Fanny Hill* or the novels of Henry Miller or a few other equally classy pornographic books that had been smuggled in from Paris by friends. But in general, getting hold of pornography was like trying to buy illegal drugs. One had to have a "connection," and one had to venture into seedy and possibly dangerous places to "score."

AS IT happened, I had such a connection in the unlikely person of an uncle of mine who was more like an older brother to me than an uncle. Unlike *his* brothers, who included my father and who all acted as if there was no such thing as sex, he made no bones about his obsession with it. But so far as I could tell, he indulged this obsession exclusively through the consumption of pornography. (That *acting* on it was not for him was something he discovered to his eternal regret when a friend told him that in order to participate in an orgy, he would have to do certain things that he did not think he could bring himself to do. "But can't I just do what I want?" he asked plaintively. "No," said his friend. "If you want to be a pervert, you have to act like a pervert.")

It was thanks to my uncle that I had seen a pornographic film starring a young woman named Candy Barr (a model who was reputed to be the "moll" of a famous gangster). The film was very short, hardly more than a five-minute clip, but the great beauty of the star and the apparent enthusiasm with which she performed had made it a classic and a collector's item among connoisseurs of hard-core pornography. They were right: even in a very bad print projected by a primitive camera onto a portable roll-down screen that resembled a cheap window shade, it was overwhelming—more so even than the few pornographic books I had read by then, and they were quite overwhelming enough.

Because I had actually seen a pornographic film, I was the envy of my circle, very few of whom had ever had this kind of first-hand experience (not that it stopped them from theorizing endlessly on the subject). And as the only one with a connection, I was under constant pressure to arrange a showing for them. At last I agreed, only to discover that my uncle's supplier had been arrested, and that he himself was very reluctant (justifiably, as it would turn out) to let his precious copy of the Candy Barr clip out of his hands. But when I explained that a group of distinguished writers and critics was eager to see the movie, he gave in out of deference to "educated people" whose readiness to lower themselves to his level simultaneously puzzled and pleased him.

The great event was scheduled for a party at the home of another old college friend, Jason Epstein, then a rising young book editor who would subsequently be active in the ultimately successful campaign to find an American publisher for *Lolita*; and among the many writers and critics who did indeed turn up was Susan Sontag, who would later deliver herself of a famously solemn essay in defense of pornography. By the time I arrived directly from Brooklyn with Candy Barr in the can and my uncle's projector and screen under my arm, the excitement, punctuated by many jokes, was intense. But the biggest and best joke of all was to come. First it emerged that not a single one of these "educated people" knew how to work a projector, and then the person who volunteered to try succeeded only in tangling the film and finally burning it in the heat of the projector's lamp. The sickening smell of smoldering celluloid pervaded the room, and when I thought of confronting my uncle, it sickened me even more. Everyone else was either deeply disappointed or convulsed with laughter at the fiasco which seemed to have a message hidden in it somewhere.

NOT LONG afterward, I agreed to join another (though somewhat overlapping) group of distinguished writers and critics in traveling to Provincetown, Massachusetts, to testify on behalf of a local bookseller. For stocking a novel by Hubert Selby, Jr. entitled *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, which was notorious for the graphic description it contained of a gang rape, this bookseller had been put on trial for violating the local law against the dissemination of obscene materials. But since the Supreme Court had exempted any work that, taken as a whole, possessed literary value, the defense in such cases usually consisted in summoning expert witnesses to grant the necessary certification.

I did not much like or admire Selby's unrelievedly grim novel, but there was no doubt that it was a serious piece of work by a talented writ-

[4] In 1996, according to a recent survey in *U.S. News & World Report*, the number of hard-core video rentals in this country reached a total of 665 million, almost all of them from "mom and pop video stores." Americans also spent an additional $150 million bringing "adult" films into their homes on pay-per-view TV, and yet another $175 million "to view porn in their rooms at major hotel chains such as Sheraton, Hilton, Hyatt, and Holiday Inn."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

er. Hence I had no problem with testifying as to its literary merit when I was put on the stand. But then the judge, a local magistrate who had been scowling at all these interlopers from New York throughout the presentation of the case for the defense and who seemed to take an especially sour view of my testimony, suddenly decided to cross-examine me himself. "Do you have any children?" he demanded. "Yes," I said. "Any of them girls?" "Three," I replied. He grinned malevolently. "Well, how would you like it if they read books like this?" The question took me by surprise, and I hesitated for a few seconds before coming up with an answer. "Your honor, there are hundreds and hundreds of books in my apartment. I don't forbid my daughters to read any of them, and I don't keep track of the ones they do." To which his honor snorted: "I'll bet."

Strictly speaking, I was telling the truth, but it was not the whole truth and nothing but the truth, given that the few specimens of hard-core pornography I owned were deliberately kept out of the reach of our kids by being placed on the top shelf of a very tall bookcase. Like Heinrich Blücher's charge that I was taking the fun out of sex, the judge's sarcastic remark stayed with me. Whenever I told the story, I would mock him with Menckenesque gusto, and so would my audience. But that "I'll bet" must have given me my first inkling that hypocrisy in these matters was no longer a monopoly of Mencken's "booboisie."

Though the pornographic books I kept up on that high shelf were all of the literate variety usually known as "erotica," they were still hard-core in the sense that their whole point was to provide highly explicit descriptions of sexual activity. To the extent that they made use of genuinely novelistic elements like a plot and carefully drawn characters, the purpose was to set off and heighten the impact of the dirty passages. (And "dirty" was the word that I and every other fighter for the legalization of pornography used in the privacy of our own minds, and indeed everywhere else except in a courtroom or when the politics of the issue required us to mouth the standard liberal pieties.) But a few other books that were not in the least pornographic in that sense were also up on that top shelf, and among them was the original edition of *Lolita*, published in Paris in 1955.

Nabokov had sent the manuscript to Paris with some reluctance and only after numerous rejections had convinced him that he would never find an American publisher for it.[5] One of those rejections had come from Doubleday, where the fierce battle being waged for its acceptance by Jason Epstein had foundered on his superiors' quite reasonable fear of prosecution. At any rate, it was from Epstein that I first heard of *Lolita*, and it was from him, if I remember rightly, that I got my copy of the cheaply bound and printed edition put out by the Olympia Press, a young company that specialized in erotica written, as *Lolita* was, in English.

English was not exactly a foreign language to Nabokov—he had learned it as a child in czarist Russia from governesses and tutors—but it was still not his own in the way his beloved native Russian was. In fact, before venturing in his forties on a novel in English, he had already written many volumes both of fiction and poetry in Russian (most of them published in Europe after he had been driven into exile by the Bolshevik Revolution). And although he was not the only writer ever to have pulled off this trick of switching to English from a radically different native tongue, he outdid even his closest rival, the great Joseph Conrad, in his amazing mastery of the new language. More: in my judgment, to which I still hold today, he could even give James Joyce, born to English and its most spectacular contemporary virtuoso, a close run for his money.

But as I have now come to understand on rereading Nabokov in the new Library of America edition, there was something less admirable that went along with his linguistic genius and that he also had in common with Joyce: a contempt for his audience. I realize this is a very harsh charge, but how else can one honestly describe the attitude implicit in a style so in love with itself that it often loses sight of what it is supposed to be conveying, and so aesthetically narcissistic that it intransigently refuses to make any concessions whatsoever to the reader, even to the point of often requiring an editor's footnotes to decipher the pyrotechnical wordplay in which it so mischievously indulges?

Discussing this very issue in the course of deigning to engage in the "fatal fatuity" of explicating a series of such allusions, Nabokov was unusually frank about it. "It may be asked if it is really worth an author's while to devise and distribute these delicate markers whose very nature requires that they be not too conspicuous." Who,

[5] He finally did in 1958, when Putnam put out the first American edition.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

after all, will notice them or, having noticed, will be able to make sense of them without the help of footnotes? No matter. "In the long run, . . . it is only the author's private satisfaction that counts."

Far from being peculiar to Nabokov and Joyce, this attitude was shared by practically every novelist and poet associated with the modernist movement. In a manifesto issued in Paris in 1926, for instance, a large group of writers declared, among other things, that "The writer expresses. He does not communicate," and ended with "The plain reader be damned." It must further be acknowledged that in arrogant authorial indifference to the reasonable expectations of the reader, "plain" or fancy, Nabokov was a mild sinner when set alongside Joyce. Asked how he expected anyone to understand *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce once replied: "The demand that I make of my reader is that he should devote his whole life to reading my works." Nabokov never went that far either in theory or in practice (he admired *Ulysses* but not *Finnegans Wake*). Still, as a relentless player of what the editor of the Library of America edition calls "intricate games of deception and concealment" (meaning this, in accordance with good modernist doctrine, as a compliment), a sinner he was nevertheless.

HERE *Lolita* is an exception among Nabokov's novels. It is relatively easy to follow, and the linguistic pyrotechnics, while still on display, are kept under unusually strict control. Yet if *Lolita* is more or less free of this species of modernist sin, it is just as driven as Nabokov's other novels by the radical modernist aestheticism of which their "intricate games of deception" and their stylistic excesses are only one symptom or expression. This kind of aestheticism was once summed up in the slogan "art for art's sake," which was to say, *not* for the sake of God or morality or ideology or society. Often for better (as a protection against the dictates of politics) and sometimes for worse (as an encouragement to mandarinism and hermeticism), the aestheticist creed thus represented a declaration of the artist's independence from any and all obligations other than those imposed by the laws of his art.

No more fanatical devotee of this creed existed than Vladimir Nabokov. There were only two things he cared about as a writer. One was capturing the exact feel and color and shading and texture of a perception or an emotion or a memory, and the other was fooling around with language for the sheer fun of exercising his enormous power over it. The subject matter of a novel was of little importance to him except as an occasion—I might almost say a pretext—for doing these things. Here is how he himself put it:

> For me a work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm. . . . All the rest is either topical trash or what some call the Literature of Ideas. . . .

Whenever he could, Nabokov made sure to disabuse anyone who might be led by the subject matter of his own work to misinterpret it (even sympathetically) as belonging to either of those dread categories. A good example of how he did this was the introduction he provided to a later reissue of *Bend Sinister*, one of his earliest novels in English.

Set in a fictional country that has fallen under totalitarianism, and written by a man who had fled the Soviet regime and clearly hated it with all his heart, *Bend Sinister* was in danger of being taken by the innocent "plain reader" to be about Soviet Russia, much as George Orwell's roughly contemporaneous *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* were. But Nabokov repudiated any such reference. *Bend Sinister*, he insisted, had no kinship whatever with "Orwell's clichés" (which he clearly consigned to the category of "topical trash"):

> I have never been interested in what is called the literature of social comment. . . . I am neither a didacticist nor an allegorizer. Politics and economics, atomic bombs, primitive and abstract art forms, the entire Orient, symptoms of "thaw" in Soviet Russia, the Future of Mankind, and so on, leave me supremely indifferent. . . . Similarly, the influence of my epoch on [*Bend Sinister*] is as negligible as the influence of my books, or at least of this book, on my epoch.

In short, despite being interlarded "with bits of Lenin's speeches, and a chunk of the Soviet constitution, and gobs of Nazist pseudo-efficiency," *Bend Sinister* was "not really about life and death in a grotesque police state." Its main theme was the love of a father for his son, and what mattered most in it was certain recurrent images, such as a puddle that appeared at the very beginning and then reappeared at various points later on as an ink blot, an ink stain, spilled milk, and several other similarly interesting mutations.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As with politics, so with morality. "*Lolita*," Nabokov declared of this novel about a pedophile (Humbert Humbert) who seduces his twelve-year-old stepdaughter (Lolita) and continues forcing himself on her until she runs away, "has no moral in tow." Indeed, those "gentle souls who would pronounce *Lolita* meaningless because it does not teach them anything" are more right than they know. For "the nerves of the novel, . . . the secret points, the subliminal coordinates by means of which the book is plotted" and through which it affords the discerning reader the "aesthetic bliss" whose achievement is the only purpose for which it exists, are not located in the story of a pedophile and his victim, let alone in any lessons that might flow from it. They lie, rather, in

> such images as Mr. Taxovich, or that class list of Ramsdale School, or Charlotte saying "waterproof," or Lolita in slow motion advancing toward Humbert's gifts, or the pictures decorating the stylized garret of Gaston Godin, or the Kasbeam barber . . . , or Lolita playing tennis, or the hospital at Elphinstone, or pale, pregnant, beloved, irretrievable Dolly Schiller dying in Gray Star (the capital town of the book), or the tinkling sounds of the valley town coming up the mountain trail. . . .

Now, Nabokov was undoubtedly right when he then proceeded to deny that *Lolita* was a work of pornography. While it did, in his words, "contain various allusions to the physiological urges of a pervert," it did not contain obscene language or explicit descriptions of sexual activity. The problem, then, as Nabokov recognized, was not with his treatment of the theme, but with the theme itself. It was, he wrote, one of three "which are utterly taboo as far as most American publishers are concerned," the other two being a successful interracial marriage and an "atheist who lives a happy and useful life, and dies in his sleep at the age of 106."

Yet here, for once, the snobbish sarcasm to which Nabokov was always given outraced his immense intelligence and trumped his normal passion for precision, since the other two themes were not remotely in the same class of the forbidden as the idea of adults molesting children. Nor did they inspire the same kind or degree of horror, assuming they even inspired it at all outside of certain restricted social circles. Hence in telling the story it told, *Lolita* was admitting something truly forbidden into public consciousness, and by doing so it was—whether Nabokov liked it or not—insidiously seducing its readers into "thinking about the unthinkable."

I have borrowed that phrase from the debates over nuclear war which were being conducted around the same time *Lolita* came out in an American edition. It was charged then that strategists like Herman Kahn who speculated about the waging of nuclear war were breaking the taboo against it and thereby making it more likely to happen. Could an analogous charge be lodged against Nabokov's novel about a pedophile? In the case of Kahn and the others, they defended themselves by saying that, on the contrary, they were making nuclear war less likely by teaching us how better to deter it. But no such defense was available to Nabokov. By his own account, he was not trying to teach us anything one way or the other about pedophilia. And while he did not hesitate to label pedophilia a perversion, the way he treated it was emphatically not calculated to deepen our horror over it. Just the opposite. And herein lies a paradox.

Because, as D.H. Lawrence said, the point of pornography is to "do dirt on sex," and because it also depends for its effect on the feeling that sex is dirty, a straightforwardly pornographic treatment of pedophilia would inevitably retain the sense of it as a taboo and would play on the horror attached to violating it. Not so with Nabokov. The very brilliance of his language, the very sharpness of his wit, the very artfulness of his treatment all help to shatter the taboo and thereby to rob pedophilia of its horror. In other words, in aestheticizing the hideous, Nabokov—as I can now clearly see—comes very close to prettifying it.

Worse yet, he comes very close to excusing it. Reviewing the first American edition of *Lolita* in 1958, my old teacher and mentor, Lionel Trilling, began with an acknowledgment of how shocking the book was, but then added:

> And we find ourselves the more shocked when we realize that, in the course of reading the novel, we have come virtually to condone the violation it presents, . . . to see the situation as less and less abstract and moral and horrible, and more and more as human and "understandable." Less and less, indeed, do we see a *situation*; what we become aware of is people. Humbert is perfectly willing to say that he is a monster; no doubt he is, but we find ourselves less and less eager to say so.

It is important to understand that Trilling was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saying this not to bury *Lolita* but to praise it for fulfilling what he considered one of the primary *moral* duties of the novel, which was to deepen the reader's sense of the complexity of life. On this point I agreed enthusiastically, but I was also less ambivalent than Trilling about the smashing of taboos, from which—as it seemed to me at that age and at that time—only good could come.

Be that as it may, the sort of effect Trilling described never happens in reading pornography. There are no people to understand in pornography; there is only a succession of graphically represented sexual acts performed by faceless creatures who are driven by lust and nothing but lust. This may arouse the reader's own lustful urges, but at least it can be said that pornography never plunges him into a state of moral confusion—not even on those rare occasions when it tries to do just that.

THE MOST notorious instance of a pornographer trying to sow moral confusion is to be found in the 18th century and in the person of the Marquis de Sade. "Evil, be thou my good," declares Satan in *Paradise Lost*, and Sade set out to follow that invocation into regions that would have been way beyond John Milton's most lurid antinomian imaginings. For this, Sade's books were banned in his own time. But in ours he has come to be hailed as a great writer, a great philosopher, and a great moralist—the "Divine Marquis," as his countryman, the early-20th-century avant-garde poet Guillaume Apollinaire, called him.

I was reminded of all this by the appearance of Roger Shattuck's *Forbidden Knowledge*, which spends many pages refuting the case for the rehabilitation and canonization of Sade. Shattuck does a very good job of it, but as I went through those learned and carefully nuanced pages with their earnest and respectful analyses of the arguments advanced by the (mostly French) intellectuals to whom Sade's work resembles (as one of them actually put it) "the sacred books of the great religions," I could not help thinking—again—of Orwell, and specifically of what he once said about certain obviously ridiculous ideas: "One has to belong to the intelligentsia to believe things like that; no ordinary man could be such a fool."

If Shattuck had been addressing the ordinary man, he could have won his case simply by juxtaposing the claims made by admirers of the "Divine Marquis" with the samples of Sade's own writings he quotes in *Forbidden Knowledge*. So disgusting are those writings that even today, when anything goes, it is daring of Shattuck to quote them, and even then he (or his publisher) must have thought it the better part of prudence to print a notice at the head of the book warning parents and teachers of material to come that is "inappropriate for children and minors," and still another notice in the chapter on Sade flagging "passages that many people will consider offensive and obscene in the extreme." Why then use them? Here is Shattuck's justification:

> Most writings on Sade and even some anthologies avoid such explicitness and limit their quotations to philosophical discussions of crime, passion, nature, freedom, and the like. To bowdlerize Sade in this fashion distorts him beyond recognition. The actions described in his works directly complement the ideas and probably surpass them in psychological impact.

Except for that "probably"—"most assuredly" or "infinitely" would have been more accurate—this is excellent, and it brings to mind the first time I finally read Sade himself after having read a number of the critics taken on by Shattuck. Encountering Sade in the flesh, so to speak, I was almost as shocked by the mendacity of those critics as by what I found in his books.

First of all, none of them had made clear that for Sade the supreme sexual act is buggery, both of men and of women, but of the latter mainly as an expression of revulsion for the female sexual organs so great that he could imagine—and actually describe with great relish—sewing them up. Though he does include plenty of the whipping and other forms of torture that have come to be associated with his name, buggery is by so wide a margin his favorite sexual activity that the term "sadist" might more precisely have been used as a synonym for sodomite.

I confess that I do not understand why the commentators I read some 35 or 40 years ago on Sade, who exalted him for his "unfaltering demand for the truth" (Jean Paulhan) and for "daring to look [his dangerous fantasies] in the eye" (Georges Bataille), were so prissily reticent about the homosexual content of those fantasies. Perhaps in passing lightly over the connection in Sade between homosexuality and a loathing of women—who are represented as foul in themselves and foul too because they breed (Sade, as Shattuck points out, regarded "propagation of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

species as contrary to nature")—his apologists were being protective of homosexuality.[6]

Another possibility is that Sade's admirers were being protective of *him*, fearing that to call attention to his homosexuality would limit his allegedly universal relevance and compromise their claim that his fantasies are directly relevant to everyone. If so, this would be of a piece with the general bowdlerizing about which Shattuck complains, and which was the second source of my astonishment when I first read Sade after having read some of his defenders. Just as they glided so lightly over Sade's homosexuality that I was amazed to discover how blatantly pervasive it was in his books, so they also failed to convey a sense of what Sade's pornographic scenes were actually like.

Like Shattuck, I believe that the only way to convey such a sense is through quotation and paraphrase, and I now mean to borrow from *Forbidden Knowledge* in doing so. Being less nervy than he is, however, I will for the most part reproduce not Sade's own language but only a small segment of one of Shattuck's summaries, from which in addition I will omit a few details. Of course, even in this slightly cleaned-up version, the passage remains utterly revolting:

> After a bizarre double wedding ceremony in drag among members of the same sex, . . . the sons are forced to bugger the father, who imitates the shrieking behavior of a young virgin. Whippings begin, blood flows, breasts are ripped off, limbs are broken and dislocated, and eyes are torn out while Noirceuil sodomizes the victims. . . . Brought to extreme arousal by the excruciating torture to death of two female victims, Noirceuil buggers one of his sons while literally eating the boy's heart, which has been torn out of his body by Juliette.

Noirceuil then violently rapes Juliette's seven-year-old daughter ("this disgusting product of the sacred balls of your abominable husband"), after which, with the mother's enthusiastic assent, he throws the child naked into the flames. Sade writes, in Juliette's voice:

> I help him with a poker to arrest her natural compulsive responses to save herself. . . . Others are diddling us and buggering us. Marianne is roasting. She is consumed. Noirceuil discharges. I do the same.

One must indeed "belong to the intelligentsia"—or perhaps the *French* intelligentsia—to see moral value and wisdom in the abstract lectures about freedom and nature with which Sade surrounds such scenes and for which they are supposed to serve as concrete illustrations.

What Roger Shattuck does in discussing Sade is precisely what the director Milos Forman lacks the honesty and/or the guts to do in *The People vs. Larry Flynt*. As I have already indicated, I caught this movie while I was rethinking the issue of pornography, and quite apart from turning out to be wildly overrated as a work of cinematic art, it nudged me in exactly the opposite direction from the one it wanted me to go.

Flynt is the publisher of a magazine called *Hustler* whose stock-in-trade has been vividly described by Bob Herbert in his column in the *New York Times*:

> A photo of a man driving a jackhammer into the vagina of a naked woman was captioned: "A simple cure for frigidity." One of the magazine's covers showed a disembodied woman's head in a gift box. . . . [Another feature] showed four photographs of women's bodies in various stages of mutilation. The photos are attached to what appears to be charred human skin. Razor blades are scattered about. Nipples and what appear to be clitorises are attached to the skin with fishhooks and safety pins. Some of the women in the photos have been decapitated, or have lost limbs. A dead woman, naked, is shown lying beside a toilet.

Not that you would guess any of this from Forman's movie, any more than you would suspect that a Justice Department report once calculated that children were shown as sexual objects in *Hustler* on an average of fourteen times per issue.

No doubt out of fear that seeing what *Hustler* is really like would alienate the audience's sympathy for Flynt (not to mention the fear of losing money by bringing an X rating down on his head), Forman bowdlerizes his subject much as, *mutatis mutandis*, the defenders of Sade used to do. Thus he conveys the impression that *Hustler* is nothing more than a downmarket version of *Playboy*, a bit raunchier perhaps but also more given to prankish humor and satirical high-jinks. In fact, a piece of satirical high-jinks is precisely how the movie

[6] I learn from Shattuck that some critics are now finally acknowledging that "the central Sadean doctrine is the primacy of the act of sodomy." Shattuck himself agrees about "the all-pervasiveness of sodomy in Sade's writings," but interestingly enough, both he and the critics he cites, while talking easily about "anal intercourse" and perfectly willing to call it "buggery," still shy away from identifying it as a largely homosexual practice.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

characterizes the notorious *Hustler* cartoon that showed the evangelist Jerry Falwell committing incest with his mother in an outhouse. It was this cartoon which led to the libel suit whose resolution in Flynt's favor by the Supreme Court forms the triumphant climax of the movie.

Forman's cheerleaders—compounding his dishonesty with their own—make a big point of insisting that he never "glorifies" or even "whitewashes" Flynt himself. Yet the plain fact is that through the omission or misrepresentation of many damaging details about Flynt's life and career,[7] he too is bowdlerized—into a high-spirited and mischievous good old boy, a mixture of Huck Finn and Abbie Hoffman. Not only does this likable rogue mean no harm; he is actually a courageous fighter for freedom—sexual freedom and freedom of the press—against the puritanical hypocrites who wish to suppress both. Furthermore, never is there so much as a faint hint that there might exist other kinds of people with other grounds for objecting to the open circulation of a magazine like *Hustler*.

PROMINENT AMONG these missing people and perspectives are feminists like Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin who regard pornography as degrading to women and who are for that reason no less eager than the Christian Right to censor it.[8] Now I happen to disagree with these feminists about heterosexual pornography in general. In my opinion, what the critic Louis Menand observes about the mass-market pornography which emerged into full public view in the late 60's and early 70's—namely, that it was based on the idea "that women enjoyed sex as much as men, and in the same way as men were imagined to enjoy it—that is, actively, promiscuously, and without guilt"—has always been true of heterosexual pornography. This idea may be "just another male fantasy," and it may be false to the sexual nature of women, but it cannot be said to degrade them. (Of course Dworkin and MacKinnon believe that normal heterosexual intercourse, which they regard as almost always indistinguishable from rape, is just as degrading to women as the pornography that describes it.)

Where *Hustler* is concerned, however, I think these feminists have a point. If there is a case of heterosexual pornography that truly does degrade women, it is *Hustler*, in whose eyes they are all filthy sluts who deserve to be brutalized. Flynt, a kind of straight subliterate Sade, also forges the same "association of sexual gratification with malevolence, pain, torture, and murder" that Shattuck identifies as the distinctive mark of the "Divine Marquis."

THERE IS also another opposing perspective whose existence is not acknowledged either by Milos Forman himself or by the admirers of his movie. Less visible for the moment than the feminist argument but intellectually far more formidable, it is represented by the two recent books I mentioned at the outset. The first, Roger Shattuck's *Forbidden Knowledge*, I have already touched on in discussing Sade (though it covers much more ground). The second, Rochelle Gurstein's *The Repeal of Reticence*, carries the rather unwieldy subtitle "A History of America's Cultural and Legal Struggles Over Free Speech, Obscenity, Sexual Liberation, and Modern Art." Both these books—neither, by the way, written by a conservative—raise troubling questions about the price we have paid for what I myself once applauded: the shattering of all taboos (Shattuck) and the dragging of everything that was once private into full public display (Gurstein).

The great service Shattuck and Gurstein perform is to remind us forcibly that there is more—a great deal more—to say about the legalization of pornography than is dreamed of in the philosophy of the writers and artists for whom unrestrained freedom of expression is the supreme value and civil libertarians for whom the discussion begins and ends with the First Amendment. Here Gurstein is especially relevant. Reaching back to the late-19th and early-20th centuries, she revisits the writings of the mostly forgotten members of the "party of reticence" (among them the once well-known essayist Agnes Repplier and two college presidents, Charles Eliot Norton of Harvard and William Trufant Forster of Reed), and shows how much stronger and more intellectually sophisticated their arguments were than almost anyone remembers today.

Those arguments pointed to the deleterious effects of pornography on the moral and cultural

[7] In the February 17 issue of the *Weekly Standard*, Matt Labash digs up a host of such details.

[8] If in making his movie Forman was unaware that such feminists exist, he discovered after its release how influential they could be. A piece on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* by Gloria Steinem attacking Forman for glorifying Flynt was credited with damaging the movie's commercial fortunes, and feminist ire was also blamed for the film's failure to be nominated for an Academy Award even though it had been praised to the skies by all the leading reviewers (including the conservative John Simon writing in *National Review*).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

environment, on standards of taste and judgment, and on sexual life itself. But the "party of exposure" (whose members included practically every prominent young literary figure of the age, along with sexual reformers like Margaret Sanger and political radicals of every stripe) managed to banish all such considerations from the debate. It did this first through the relentless Menckenesque campaign of ridicule that stigmatized them as hopelessly bourgeois and retrograde, and then by dragging the issue into the courts where, one by one, the objections to pornography registered by the "party of reticence" were ruled out as irrelevant, leaving the narrowly legal question of a given individual's constitutional rights as the only one that mattered.

One could scarcely dream up a more perfect epitome of this process than *The People vs. Larry Flynt*. To Milos Forman (and most of the reviewers of his movie), The People are all joyless troglodytes who have nothing to say that is worth hearing. As for Larry Flynt, he may not be to everyone's taste but everyone's freedom is nevertheless so inextricably implicated in his that when he wins his fight against Jerry Falwell in the Supreme Court, the ultimate guardian of all rights, he becomes an American hero.

Yet not even so great a victory can allow us any rest: the enemy is still there, and the fight goes on. Thus in a fawning piece, Frank Rich (whose opinion of *The People vs. Larry Flynt* is at the opposite pole from that of his fellow *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert) writes of Forman's great anxiety over "the growing power of American cultural commissars on the secular and religious Right." "I spent my most sensitive years in two totalitarian regimes," Forman (who was born and raised in Czechoslovakia) tells Rich. "The Nazis and Communists began by attacking pornography, homosexuals—it always starts very innocently."

Never mind that neither the Nazis nor the Communists "began" in this way. (The original paramilitary unit of the Nazi party, the SA, was filled with homosexuals, including its commander, while in the early days of Communist rule in Russia, "free love" was elevated over marriage and the avant-garde dominated the arts.) Never mind that comparing "the secular and religious Right" in America to Nazis and Communists is a vile insult. Never mind that if we do have "cultural commissars" in this country, they are the very critics and reviewers who have cheered Milos Forman and pronounced his movie a great work of art.

Never mind all that, and never mind too that until only yesterday (as Gurstein demonstrates), no one ever imagined that the freedom of speech guaranteed by the First Amendment extended to pornography. So far as Forman and his admirers are concerned, anyone who opposes the likes of Larry Flynt is still backward or wicked or both, and the corrupting effects of pornography on our society and on our culture (if indeed there are any) are still a small price to pay (if indeed a price it is) for our most precious freedom.

I never knew until I read Rochelle Gurstein that one of the original and most influential authors of this line of reasoning, the famous civil-liberties lawyer Morris Ernst, came to have second thoughts about its validity. As far back as 1970, Ernst admitted that he was repelled by the "present display of sex and sadism on the streets" and "sodomy on the stage or masturbation in the public area." Surely, Gurstein comments,

> his lifelong project had miscarried when purveyors of pornography could claim they were completing the movement begun by his own brilliant defense of *Ulysses*, where, as he put it, he had "legitimatized a four-letter word." "I deeply resent the idea . . . that the lowest common denominator, the most tawdry magazine, pandering for profit, to use the Supreme Court's word, should be able to compete in the marketplace with no constraints."[9]

Here, then, we have a third perspective whose existence goes unacknowledged by Forman's movie and its admirers.

Of the many points emerging from these varied perspectives, there are two that have hit me with special force. The first is the emphasis placed by the "party of reticence" on pollution. This is a word we now use only about the physical environment, having forgotten that we also live in a moral and cultural environment that is equally vulnerable to contamination. We have forgotten too that our minds and spirits, no less than our lungs, can be damaged when the air they breathe is fouled by pollutants. If we are willing to place restrictions on the manufacturers of material goods in order to protect ourselves against pollution of the physical environment, why should we

[9] Ernst was not the only leader of the "party of exposure" who later developed second thoughts. Even Mencken did to some degree, and others like Walter Lippmann and Joseph Wood Krutch also came to feel as they grew older that the complete rout of "the party of reticence" had brought with it unforeseen and unfortunate consequences.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not be willing to take measures that would offer protection against pollution of the moral and cultural environment?

The second point that has hit me hard has to do with the effect of pornography on sex itself. In this connection, Rochelle Gurstein leans heavily on a phrase that comes from Milos Forman's countryman and contemporary, Milan Kundera, who used it as the title of one of his novels: "the unbearable lightness of being." This phrase has long been one of my own favorites because it so wonderfully defines what life is like when the burdens of responsibility and consequence are lifted from it. These burdens may seem intolerably heavy, but it is the lightness experienced in casting them off that is really unbearable. And this is what has happened to sex in our time.

Listen to the testimony of Katie Roiphe in her new book *Last Night in Paradise.*[10] A liberated young woman who talks openly and even boastfully about her many affairs, Roiphe has begun to understand on her own pulses what the unbearable lightness of being means:

> We find ourselves living without the pain, reassurance, and clarity of late-19th-century social censure. We are on our own . . . yearning for consequences. Meaning. A tiny ruffling of the social order. If an act has serious social ramifications, . . . then it appears to have transcendent meaning as well. It matters. It changes things. . . . The end of consequences has created a new moral universe in which events such as Anna Karenina's adulterous affair can seem formless and weightless.

It was, I recognize, the sexual revolution, not pornography, that created this state of affairs, but pornography helped trigger that revolution and, accompanying it every inch down the slippery slope, also played an autonomous part of its own. Heinrich Blücher, all those years ago, accused me of taking the fun out of sex by defending pornography, but he might better have charged me with turning it into something weightless. For sex without consequence of any kind is precisely what pornography sells: sex that is cut loose from morality, from love, from pregnancy, from marriage, from jealousy, from hurt. In this "pornotopian" world, sex thus liberated brings unalloyed ecstasy. In the real world, it brings the unbearable lightness of being.

AND SO it is that I have fallen to wondering uneasily whether, if we wish to clean up our moral and spiritual environment and at the same time put at least some of the weight back into sex, we should consider a restoration of censorship. Roger Shattuck provides all the materials needed to construct a case for doing just that, but he answers No to Simone de Beauvoir's question, "Must We Burn Sade?" (and *a fortiori* less extreme variants of pornography). Rochelle Gurstein, after providing a complementary set of materials, ends with a sympathetic account of a book by Harry Clor which forthrightly advocates censorship, but she herself falls short of a ringing endorsement of it.

Daring, then, as Shattuck and Gurstein are in trying to promote a return of the now-repressed arguments for respecting taboos and banishing obscenity from the public square, they are not quite daring enough to drop the other shoe. Neither, if truth be told, am I. This is not, as I have already indicated, because I think that censoring pornography is the first step on the road to totalitarianism. And it is not because I buy the specious historical and legal contention that the First Amendment applies no less to pornography than to political speech. No, the reason I hesitate to come out for censorship is that I cannot conceive of government bureaucrats I would trust to do the censoring. In the past, such officials could detect no difference between the likes of D.H. Lawrence and the likes of Larry Flynt; it seems unlikely that their successors would be any more discriminating.

And yet, having acknowledged that, I also ask myself whether the banning of some genuinely good books would be too high a price to pay for getting rid of the poisons in the moral and cultural air we breathe. Once upon a time, when I was a devotee of the religion of art and a leftist to boot, the very question would have struck me as nothing short of blasphemous. But I ask it of myself today because it is no longer all that obvious to me that my mother-in-law, who certainly would not have been able to tell the difference between *Lolita* and Larry Flynt, was wrong in trying to protect her "part of the country" from both. If we cannot have *Lolita* without taking Larry Flynt, or for that matter the Marquis de Sade, maybe we should refuse the whole package deal.

But what about *Lolita* itself? Must we have *Lolita*? I ask myself this even more blasphemous question because I can no longer dismiss out of hand the possibility that *Lolita* bears at least some share of the blame for the plague of pedophilia

[10] Little, Brown, 208 pp., $21.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that has been raging through this country and that has now hit my mother-in-law's home state with a special vengeance. By helping to make pedophilia thinkable, may not Nabokov have to some indeterminate extent been responsible for the greater toleration that gradually came to be accorded what had previously been regarded as perhaps the most horrible of all crimes?[11]

Thankfully, not all the horror has been drained out of pedophilia. Child molesters are still excoriated, and the fear of them is still great enough to generate outbreaks of hysteria in which innocent parents and teachers are falsely accused by little children at the prompting of overzealous prosecutors and by grown women with "recovered memories" planted by quack psychotherapists. (I suspect, incidentally, that the credence given to these outbreaks is the displaced and distorted product of an uneasy conscience. After all, with so many little children being guiltily left in day-care centers, it is no wonder that lurid imaginings should arise of the dangers to which they are being abandoned; and it is also no wonder that an escape from guilt should then be sought in the idea that children are as much at risk from their own fathers at home as they are from custodians in nursery school. Even then, there is no escape from the guilt everyone surely feels over doing so little in general to protect the children of this country from the moral poisons in the air.)

In any event, even when the accusations of child molestation are true, these monsters are either sent for "help," which is what usually seems to happen to fathers who have committed incest with a child, or imprisoned with shorter sentences than they deserve. (If it were up to me, they would either be executed or put away for life without possibility of parole, instead of being released after a few years with nothing to stop them from preying again but a sadly ineffective Megan's Law.)

Nabokov's own fictional pedophile, Humbert Humbert, was not so gently let off by his creator, who arranged for him first to lose Lolita and then to die in prison (of a heart attack). But Nabokov stood at the top of this particular slippery slope, down which he did his part to push us. Now, after 40 years of sliding, we have landed in a region where the condition of being has become so light and so weightless that the only consequence suffered by a real-life Humbert Humbert like Woody Allen is a short-lived scandal that does not even deprive him of his Lolita or leave him sufficiently disgraced to ruin his career.

Little did I ever expect that I would wind up on the edge of endorsing the censorship of pornography, and not in my wildest conservative dreams did I ever before entertain the thought that we might have been better off if even a masterpiece like *Lolita* had never been published. But such is the uncomfortable pass to which I have been driven by the dormant memories that were evoked and the settled questions that were reopened by that story about a ring of pedophiles in Minnesota which appeared in the paper just as I happened to be rereading what I now see as a dangerous book paradoxically made all the more dangerous by its dazzling virtues as a work of art.

[11] *Lolita* has by now sold more than fourteen million copies, and a new film version will soon be released. It will star a first-time actress in her early teens named Dominique Swain (whose saucy photograph recently adorned the covers of both *Esquire* and *Vanity Fair*). Unlike the relatively tame version done by Stanley Kubrick in the early 60's, or indeed the novel itself, the new Lolita will feature explicit scenes of copulation in the nude. Miss Swain reportedly had no objection to appearing nude in those scenes herself, but to avoid running afoul of the kiddie-porn laws, a nineteen-year-old "body double" was used in her place.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Day of the Race Men

Tamar Jacoby

LONG WRITTEN off by many Americans as a bigot and a thug, Louis Farrakhan is still somehow in contention for the title of the nation's number-one black leader. Indeed, in the year and a half since his original Million Man March in Washington, D.C., most moderate civil-rights spokesmen have endorsed the event. Farrakhan's trip to Libya and Iraq to pay court to two of the world's most unsavory dictators has done little to dim his luster. On the contrary, he has been profiled favorably in the *New Yorker* and included among *Time* magazine's 25 most important Americans. This past fall, as the Republican party strove to reach out to black voters, even vice-presidential candidate Jack Kemp spoke admiringly of Farrakhan and urged Jewish leaders to meet with him.

Unsettling as it may be, Farrakhan's ascendance is only a symptom of a larger problem: an ever-worsening crisis of black leadership. Try as one might to write off the Farrakhans, the Al Sharptons, and the Marion Barrys, the fact is that more effective and judicious statesmen seem in short supply. Why is this so? Why do black Americans seem so ill-served by their representatives—and why do they appear unable to replace them with better? A raft of recent books offers some tentative answers.

NOT ALL disappointing leaders are disappointing in the same way, and today's black establishment is no exception. The common shorthand view divides the field into two opposing camps—one angrily separatist, the other accommodating and integrationist—represented respectively by Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. Each camp is seen to have its own style and core beliefs: the separatists rebellious, defiant, sometimes violent, urging followers to get their own house in order, largely indifferent to white perceptions; the integrationists pragmatic, compromising, concerned above all to work out a deal with the powers that be. On this view, Malcolm's children would include Farrakhan, Sharpton, the former NAACP president Benjamin Chavis (now Chavis Muhammad), and a range of other, still angrier nationalists. King's heirs would be a little harder to name, but the list presumably might include most members of the Congressional Black Caucus along with leaders of the major civil-rights organizations.

This shorthand typology makes a convenient crutch for the perplexed, but the true picture is more complicated. Among the activists profiled in recent books, the late Bayard Rustin springs preeminently from the integrationist tradition. Although an informative new biography of him

TAMAR JACOBY, *who contributed "The Bitter Legacy of Malcolm X" to our February 1993 issue, is completing a book about the recent history of race relations in America.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by the *New Yorker* writer Jervis Anderson does not bring us close to the inner life of the man, it does paint an intriguingly complex portrait of the King heritage.[1] It also points to a better set of criteria for judging today's black spokesmen.

BAYARD RUSTIN was present—often as a critically important player—at just about every major turn of civil-rights history. A one-time radical leftist turned pacifist, Rustin already in the 1940's was pioneering the use of Gandhian techniques to resist segregation. An eccentric man—a flamboyant homosexual with a princely bearing, a cold, sharp analytical mind, and unlikely patience for the tiniest details of political organizing—he played a pivotal role in convincing King to adopt the methods of nonviolence, then later prodded him to found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and more or less single-handedly organized the 1963 March on Washington.

The picture of the Southern struggle that emerges from Rustin's life does not exactly conform to the clichéd, romanticized view. In reality, the early pioneers of the movement were bona-fide militants, and their eagerness to enter into the mainstream was accompanied by an equally strong, angry urge to protest its injustices. Rustin's story makes the point most starkly because he was by nature something of a trouble-maker: a defiant man who liked attention and was determined to confront the system, no matter what the personal cost. Indeed, it was the intensely proud, iconoclastic Rustin who inspired a generation of younger and even angrier radicals, including the black-power advocate Stokely Carmichael, who now goes by the name Kwame Touré. Nor was Rustin the only rebellious man in King's entourage. Both his biography and a recent memoir by Andrew Young,[2] a man of very different temperament whose years as King's lieutenant began in 1963, are filled with stories of the unending struggle in the ranks between those who saw protest as a means to an end and another, more zealous group drawn to resistance largely for resistance's sake.

Today, for most black spokesmen and their partisans, it is this rebelliousness—and not the emphasis on nonviolence or integration—that is the "legacy" of the Southern movement. Anyone who takes it upon himself to stand up for blacks against whites, anyone who organizes a protest march or an economic boycott, cannot resist wrapping himself in King's mantle. Even as he polarizes New York streets with racial epithets and violence, Al Sharpton claims he is repeating what the SCLC did at Birmingham and Selma.

But in fact the movement was far more focused and disciplined than the actions of its would-be inheritors suggest. However strong his impulse to rebel, Rustin, for one, never lost sight of the larger goal: a better relationship with mainstream America. On a personal level, and in contrast to many prominent blacks today, Rustin liked and trusted whites, and clung to the idea of universality, what he called "the oneness of the human family." Even more importantly, he believed implicitly that American society, basically decent, could change for the better, and on these grounds he rejected the black-power movement as isolating and divisive. "I agree with you about the importance of pride in being black," Rustin once told some younger men, "but being black is not a program."

That was the key word: program. King's early confidants understood implicitly that effective black leadership had to be more than merely expressive. The movement had to go beyond rebellion for rebellion's sake: it had to deliver, by enhancing race relations and opening up opportunity. No moment in Rustin's life was more important—for him or for the movement—than his turn away from civil disobedience toward political action. His groundbreaking article, "From Protest to Politics," published in COMMENTARY in February 1965, grew precisely from his conviction that the struggle's traditional approach was no longer suited to achieving its goals. Demonstrations might lead to new laws or to a dropping of barriers, but they could hardly be expected to bring about deeper social changes of the kind that would be necessary if blacks were to take advantage of their new legal equality. For that, the movement needed stronger allies, and it had to frame its overall goal in a more broadly appealing way.

Morally compelling as Rustin's integrationism may have been, even more important, hindsight shows, was his pragmatism. By example and through his writings, he set a standard for all black spokesmen who followed: would their tactics be effective, would they improve people's lives?

MOST OF today's leaders, varied as they are, fail this test in one way or another. The most obvious examples are the angry outsiders who never took Rustin's advice to come in off the street. As several new memoirs attest, the very success of

[1] *Bayard Rustin: Troubles I've Seen*. HarperCollins, 400 pp., $28.00.

[2] *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America*. HarperCollins, 550 pp., $27.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Southern movement actually deepened the militancy of young Northern blacks in the 60's and 70's. Where King saw Birmingham and Selma as moments of hope, these young men saw an all-out race war, and they reacted to the hate in the faces of a few Southern bigots with a hatred of their own that encompassed all of white America. "When those girls were blown up in Birmingham in 1963, I wanted to hurt somebody," one of this generation, now a sports celebrity, said recently. "Any white person would have been all right." Today, those young men and others like them fall under the sway of Louis Farrakhan and his bizarre, megalomaniacal personality.

What exactly *is* the appeal of Farrakhan's brand of Islam, with its crazy explanations of history and its prediction of a coming racial apocalypse (complete with a flying-saucer-like "Mother of Planes")? Why does he remain so popular among blacks, with one poll after the Million Man March finding 70 percent affirming that he said things the country needed to hear, 63 percent that he spoke "the truth," and 53 percent that he offered a model for black youth?

Farrakhan's latest biographer, Arthur J. Magida, does not know the answer to any of these questions. A former journalist from Baltimore, Jewish, and an earnest liberal, Magida is hard-pressed even to put together a credible account of Farrakhan's life, let alone to explain it. Most of what is known about the Muslim leader's past is mythology: stories he himself originated long ago, repeated so often by followers that they have taken on a life of their own. And *Prophet of Rage*,[3] which gathers up the best-known of these chestnuts, is mostly another retelling of the story according to Farrakhan: a portentous tale of a Caribbean immigrant's son who dabbled in calypso music before joining the Nation of Islam, then rose through the ranks and eventually took over, converting a largely apolitical, separatist religious group into the organization we know today.

Like all personal mythologies, Farrakhan's is deeply revealing: he tells stories about himself in the third person, imagining that he is the center of all attention and at one point literally wondering why he was not chosen as the Muslim messiah. What emerges from the boasts is a portrait of a delusional personality with grandiose claims to leadership. That this allure should work for street youths is not surprising. It is harder to see what it offers middle-class blacks, increasingly integrated, educated, and powerful in their own right.

Magida's chapters on the Nation of Islam only add to the mystery. Drawing on a variety of earlier journalistic accounts, he paints a sharply damning picture of the elusive sect: not just the wild theology and now-obsessive anti-Semitism, but also its history of corruption and terrifying internal violence. Farrakhan's famous pronouncement shortly before Malcolm X's assassination that "such a man . . . is worthy of death"—words widely thought to have licensed Malcolm's killers—was not a departure from usual practice among black Muslims. As Magida chillingly shows, beatings, intimidation, and vengeful murder were common currency in that world until the late 1970's, when Farrakhan evidently scaled back to mere death threats, still issued on a regular basis. (Recent targets have included the black scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and, earlier, the black journalist who first went public with Jesse Jackson's "Hymietown" remark.) By the time he gets to the more recent rantings of Farrakhan's lieutenant Khalid Abdul Muhammad, Magida has offered enough to horrify even the most jaded Islam-watcher.

IN THE year and a half since the Million Man March, some of the black spokesmen who endorsed it have made a point of downplaying Farrakhan's personal importance. He does not figure in *Get on the Bus*, Spike Lee's movie about the event, and several black columnists have chastised whites for focusing on Farrakhan's demagoguery rather than on the self-help efforts spurred by the gathering: voter-registration drives, youth-mentoring programs, neighborhood crime watches, and the like. To the degree that Farrakhan is responsible for these initiatives, he is "delivering" for his people. But that is hardly the main reason for his popularity. On the contrary, as his interpreters have long pointed out, his appeal—and that of other race men like him—lies largely in his ability to speak for the alienation of his community. As an expressive voice and gadfly, he is without peer.

To be sure, this too may seem a way of "delivering." The cliché that there is a little bit of Malcolm and a little bit of Martin in every black is as apt today as it ever was. This, the men at the Million Man March made vividly clear. Mostly middle-class, they were drawn to Washington at least in part by assimilationist impulses, including a need to show that they are not the unacculturated outlaws they feel white America thinks they are. Yet very few of them were willing to denounce Farrakhan. If anything, they, like mainstream civ-

[3] Basic Books, 264 pp., $25.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

il-rights leaders, have reacted to appeals to distance themselves with an even stronger show of support. Not only have large numbers rallied around the Muslim leader, but the more vitriolic he has grown, the more successfully he has eclipsed more moderate spokesmen.

This is not a new pattern: if anything, it is a law of black political history that more extreme leadership upstages—and often drives out—moderates. It happened with Malcolm X and Dr. King. It happened more recently in New York, when Al Sharpton and Sonny Carson outflanked David Dinkins, the black man who was then mayor.[4] Farrakhan himself has done it to Jesse Jackson, and Farrakhan's lieutenant Khalid Muhammad has done it to Farrakhan. The angrier man makes the moderates—or relative moderates—sound as if they lack guts, and shifts the range of acceptable black opinion toward the extreme. Never mind that Malcolm's anger rescued no blacks from poverty, that Farrakhan's and Sharpton's speeches only frighten and enrage whites. Their bitter alienation somehow trumps even middle-class blacks' pragmatic impulses, the same impulses that should draw them in turn to a more pragmatic leadership.

WHETHER OR not Rustin lost the battle for the hearts and minds of many blacks, he still had a formative influence on the shape of the later struggle. In 1965, "From Protest to Politics" was denounced in movement circles as a contemptible surrender: a tired old man's betrayal of the race and its justified grievances. Yet by the time the decade drew to a close, it was clear that, tactically at least, Rustin had called the future. Electoral politics, biracial coalitions, and a far-reaching economic agenda were by then the hallmarks of black activism. As American society opened its doors—at all levels of schooling, in business, and in politics—young blacks began making their way into the system, and soon there were enough black representatives on Capitol Hill to form the Congressional Black Caucus, which was started in 1969 with nine members and which, by 1993, had grown to more than 40.

But the result, 25 years later, is a strange hybrid—what Robert C. Smith, in his useful though distractingly polemical book, *We Have No Leaders: African Americans in the Post-Civil Rights Era*,[5] calls "caucus separatism." Most blacks who aspire to leadership now play an ostensibly mainstream game. All but a few have forsworn active protest; most earn middle-class salaries, often paid by "the system" they once denounced so bitterly; the best serve in Congress or city hall, or in largely white-funded bodies that lobby the government for the kind of fundamental economic change Rustin said was necessary to heal the ghetto. Yet most could not be farther from Rustin's spirit. Clinging to the notion that what matters most is their color, and devoted to advancing what they see as the interests of the race—interests they perceive to be inalterably different from those of whites—they place supreme value on solidarity, and push an agenda of items from a far-left-wing inventory now repudiated even by many liberals: wholesale economic restructuring, a more indulgent welfare system, more extensive racial preferences, a less punitive approach to crime, and a grandstanding, race-driven foreign policy.

Kweisi Mfume exemplifies the new generation. A former street tough from Baltimore who was radicalized by the Southern movement and his own sense of powerlessness growing up in the ghetto, Mfume went through a conversion experience that helped him give up "the life" and get into college. His earnest but somewhat wooden memoir, *No Free Ride: From the Mean Streets to the Mainstream*,[6] retraces these early years and what followed: radical student politics (the issue was Black Studies), a stint on local talk radio (a vehicle to advance black consciousness), the Baltimore city council, Congress, and, since 1995, the presidency of the NAACP.

Much concerned with values and character-building, the Mfume who looks back here on his early life comes across as an impressive and able man: serious-minded, determined, generally clear about what makes a difference in people's lives. Add to this his understanding of the alienation that rules in the ghetto, and it is easy to feel that this is a young leader of great potential. All the more disappointing, then, is the politician who emerges in later chapters.

On the Baltimore city council, by his own account, Mfume did little but defy the powers that were. In Congress, though he relinquished overt provocation for provocation's sake, he remained committed to a largely oppositional agenda: the by-now standard black demands for radically "progressive" tax reform and vastly increased social spending, among other ideas. That bigger govern-

[4] Al Sharpton's autobiography, *Go and Tell Pharaoh*, written with the able reporter Anthony Walton (Doubleday, 276 pp., $23.95), gives chapter and verse on how and why this pattern persists.

[5] State University of New York Press, 352 pp., $46.50.

[6] Written with Ron Stodghill II. Ballantine, 373 pp., $25.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment might not be the answer, that there might be better ways than racial preferences to open up opportunities, that an all-out war on crime might actually be a good thing for the inner city—these in his view were and remain inherently anti-black ideas, outside of consideration. Finally, Mfume was among the first supposedly reputable black spokesmen to reach out to Farrakhan, refusing to criticize him even after an infamous, anti-Semitic tirade by Khalid Muhammad at Kean College in New Jersey. Only under pressure from fellow members of the Congressional Black Caucus, of which Mfume was then the head, did he belatedly and half-heartedly distance himself.

Since becoming president of the NAACP, Mfume has taken a somewhat more encouraging approach. He now embraces the concept, advanced both by local black leaders and white conservatives, that the best hope for the ghetto lies in a mix of self-help, self-sufficiency, and moral renewal. The problem is that, like Farrakhan, Mfume wants to have it both ways: to go on blaming white people for blacks' troubles even as he encourages followers to take responsibility for their own lives. Unable to let go of the idea of white oppression, Mfume still finds it easier to give angry speeches about the "reactionary Congress" and "our enemy . . . the Supreme Court" than to think hard or honestly about the tangled pathologies of the ghetto.

Not surprisingly, given their out-of-sync redistributionist views and often unrealistic legislative agenda, black representatives like Mfume have not been able to deliver very much for their constituents. As Robert C. Smith shows at some length, caucus separatism on the Hill has yielded little but empty symbolism: largely ignored "alternative-budget" proposals and ever more affirmative-action programs—derided by even the militant Smith as an overrated stratagem that helps only a few and "diverts attention away from the real remedies." The caucus hardly seems to be serving its backers by encouraging unlikely hopes for a government-sponsored miracle in the ghetto. Nor does its platform represent most constituents' views on social issues: a majority of black voters favor the death penalty, for example, while the caucus is unanimously opposed, and even larger voter blocs favor tougher sentencing of criminals and added requirements for welfare recipients.

Still, black voters reelect these representatives by incredible margins. After their first election to Congress, half of all caucus members run unopposed in either the next primary or general election, and their average margin of victory falls in the 80-percent range—yet another example of the trumping of practical by expressive politics.

IS THERE no alternative, inside or outside the "system"? It is telling in this connection to contrast two larger-than-life figures in American politics and black American consciousness, Jesse Jackson and Colin Powell. To the degree that black politics is now largely a symbolic politics—a matter of rhetoric, gestures, and moralistic preaching—no one takes the game farther or has played it better than Jesse Jackson. The recent biography of Jackson by Marshall Frady,[7] a former *Newsweek* reporter, makes no apology for this, or for Jackson's decision to remain on the margins of the political system, ever running for but never taking on the responsibility of office. On the contrary, Frady, a proud liberal and repentant white Southerner, glorifies Jackson and everything he stands for, seeing his subject as a desperately needed voice and the country's only true tribune of the poor and downtrodden in the era of Newt Gingrich.

Neither Frady nor Jackson seems overly concerned about what kind of practical initiatives—government or other—the reverend's "prophetic" message could or should inspire. As the book's extensive quoting of Jackson makes clear, much of his preaching about the importance of compassion and society's responsibility for "the least among us" is indeed powerful. Particularly impressive and ahead of their time were the speeches he gave to young black audiences in the mid-70's as part of the program known as PUSH-Excel: speeches encouraging self-respect and self-reliance and an honest effort to deal with attitudinal handicaps. But even then, and boosted by federal grants in the $4.5-million range, Jackson proved incapable of translating his talk into an effective program. As for his bullying entry into Democratic presidential politics, his forays into race-baiting and anti-Semitism, the polarizing results speak for themselves.

Colin Powell is an entirely different type—different not only from Jackson but from the other establishment figures portrayed in recent books. What distinguishes him is his view of color: he is less a black leader than a mainstream leader who happens to be black. In his hugely successful autobiography, *My American Journey*,[8] Powell offers

[7] *Jesse: The Life and Pilgrimage of Jesse Jackson* by Marshall Frady. Random House, 552 pp., $28.50.

[8] Reviewed in COMMENTARY by David Frum, January 1996.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a tantalizing vision of a world where race hardly matters: a society where the very notion of "black leadership" seems almost anachronistic.

In his own unemotional way, Powell is a proud black man with a keen sense of history and an appropriate indignation about what it has meant for his people. But his color-consciousness is balanced by a larger vision of common humanity. When he describes friends, black or white, or muses about policy toward Haiti, race never seems to enter his mind; at most, it is one loyalty among many. In his book, at least, Powell is also firmly opposed to racial preferences. (One can only surmise that his sense of political utility has since gotten the better of his principles on that score.) He also argues against racial redistricting, "unhealthy" self-segregation, and the tendency among young blacks to dwell so much on the African past that they never learn how to "make their way in an American world."

UTOPIAN AS it may sound, the logic of Powell's example leads to an inevitable question: does America need a black leadership whose main qualification is its blackness? In a better future—even a somewhat better future—why should a growing black middle class, rising into the system, continue to rely on messianic mediators riding on their color? As for the notion of color-coded black interests, might not that racist idea eventually die a natural death, along with the self-serving spokesmen who depend on it and the constituency it creates? And when it comes to the poorest blacks, alienated as they may now feel, might even they not some day realize how much more men like Powell have to offer them, lighting the difficult way into the system, than those who feed the anger that does so much to keep them out?

Meanwhile, and in the shorter term, two non-establishment groups are already attempting to address the problems of American blacks in new and different ways. First, far more than in the political sphere, the world of black intellectuals today makes room for ferment and dissent, some of it conventionally conservative, some better described as searching. The early generation of dissident black thinkers—men like Thomas Sowell, Glenn Loury, and Shelby Steele—has succeeded in shifting at least some of the terms of debate, opening the way for a newer cohort of label-resisting writers and scholars. This is a varied and still uncertain group—some of them rethinking, others merely trimming—and just what they might produce in the way of a nuts-and-bolts political program is not yet clear; so far, none has come up with a political agenda to rival the Congressional Black Caucus's tired redistributionist demands. Still, they point the way toward the only set of solutions that seems to hold much promise for the worst-off blacks—solutions that chart the path to social progress less through government action than through personal and cultural change.

Secondly, along with the talk, the past decade has spawned a mushroom crop of grass-roots experiments in self-help: mentoring networks, job-training programs, small-business incubation, counseling of various kinds—all intensive, retail efforts to save people, as Loury puts it, "one by one from the inside out." The mostly selfless local "leaders" who have pioneered these initiatives—sometimes ministers, but also businessmen, educators, elected officials, and others—are genuine heroes, by far the best candidates around to replace the community's tired high-profile spokesmen. But the work they have done, and much of what will be done in the coming decade, still falls in the category of emergency therapy: the kind of short-term remedial help that is marshaled on a case-by-case basis to repair specific damage.

How to create a cultural climate that can provide such encouragement and support on a permanent basis—or, better yet, one that makes it unnecessary—is a tougher question. Also unclear is just what role a political establishment can play in bringing about this kind of change. But future leaders could surely do no worse than the present generation, which has only helped make the task ahead more formidable and the obstacles, especially the inner obstacles, more intractable.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Our Interests and Our Honor

Donald Kagan

For the last 2,500 years, at least, states have conducted their affairs and often gone to war moved by considerations that would not pass the test of "vital national interests." On countless occasions they have acted to foster or to defend a collection of beliefs and feelings that have run, or appeared to run, counter to their secular practical needs, persisting in this course even when the danger has been evident and the cost high.

Modern politicians and students of politics commonly call such motives irrational. But the notion that the only thing rational or real in the conduct of nations is the search for economic benefits or physical security is itself a prejudice of our time, a product of the attempt to treat the world of human events as though it were an inanimate, motiveless physical universe. Such an approach is no more adequate to explain behavior today than it ever was.

Honor is the name of one category of concerns and motives that has dominated relations among peoples and states since antiquity. Honor includes such elements as the search for fame and glory; the desire to escape shame, disgrace, and embarrassment; the wish to avenge a wrong and thereby to restore one's reputation; the determination to behave in accordance with certain moral ideals. Although concepts of what is honorable and dishonorable can vary over time and place, sometimes superficially and sometimes deeply, and although other people's ideas of honor, especially those of an earlier time, can seem silly or outmoded, such surface variations often conceal a fundamental similarity or even identity.

To say that the pursuit of honor can run counter to a "realist" view of the national interest, of course, is not to say that it has no place in the competition for power or tangible advantage. That place may be easier to grasp if we translate honor into such terms as deference, esteem, just due, regard, respect, or, especially, prestige. When a state's power grows, the deference and respect in which it is held are likely to grow as well. Conversely, when the prestige of a state wanes, so, too, does its power—even if materially, or "objectively," that power appears to remain unaffected.

The first man carefully to observe the relationship of power and honor in the sense of prestige was the Athenian historian Thucydides. Like a modern-day "realist," he understood international relations as the competition for power, and war as the resort to arms in that competition. But he went beyond most modern scholars in explaining that in the struggle for power, whether for a rational suf-

Donald Kagan, *Hillhouse professor of history and classics at Yale, is the author of* On the Origin of War and the Preservation of Peace. *The present article is adapted from a paper Mr. Kagan delivered at a conference, "Intangible Interests and U.S. Foreign Policy," held last fall at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., the full proceedings of which will be issued later this spring.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ficiency or to amass all the power there is, people act out of a variety of motives. In his account of the causes of the Peloponnesian War, and particularly in his narration of the dispute between the states of Corinth and Corcyra, Thucydides makes plain how "fear" and "interest," commonplace as they are, often yield decisively to considerations of "honor" or threats to honor.

Honor in the particular sense employed by Thucydides—that is, honor as prestige—has played a critical role throughout history. In the period just before World War I, starting when Germany embarked on its "new course" in 1897, much of what was happening in Europe amounted to prestige politics. The German battleship navy was, after all, what Winston Churchill called it—a "luxury fleet." Though it played a major role in causing the war, it took no significant part in the fighting and never did Germany any practical good. Both the 1909 and 1911 crises with France over the status of Morocco were provoked by Germany's search for prestige, and the same could be said of Germany's excessively harsh and unnecessary ultimatum in the Bosnian crisis of 1908-9. These were the policies that created, in turn, the prewar alliance system and the arms race on land and sea, and that set Austria and Russia on a collision course in the Balkans.

Great Britain's concern for honor, and for the danger that dishonor posed to its safety and therefore its power, played a large role in the decisions taken by the British government prior to the war. In his famous Mansion House speech of 1911, David Lloyd George said:

> I believe it is essential . . . that Britain should at all hazards maintain her prestige among the Great Powers of the world. . . . [I]f a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated, where her interests were vitally affected, as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure.

Britain's Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, spoke in similar terms. On August 3, 1914 he told parliament that Britain could keep out of the war by issuing a proclamation of unconditional neutrality, but he rejected that course:

> If we did take that line by saying: "We will have nothing whatever to do with this matter," . . . we should, I believe, sacrifice our respect and good name and reputation before the world, and should not escape the most serious and grave economic consequences.

Years later, Grey wrote that "The real reason for going into the war was that, if we did not stand by France and stand up for Belgium against [German] aggression, we should be isolated, discredited, and hated; and there would be nothing for us but a miserable and ignoble future." The British, in short, were moved by fear of the danger Germany presented to their most vital interests, but they understood the danger, and brought themselves to face its consequences, by seeing it as a threat to their honor.

At least one kind of honor, then, clearly has a place in calculations of national power—more difficult to measure, perhaps, than tangible "interests," but measurable nevertheless. But nations, like individuals, uphold other conceptions of honor as well, and they also pursue honor in ways that are the product not of calculation but of feeling. Thucydides' account of Corinth's quarrel with Corcyra shows, indeed, how these different ideas and impulses are often intertwined. The Corinthians, he writes, became involved in an unimportant civil war on the fringes of the Greek world

> out of hatred for the Corcyraeans, for [the latter] paid no attention to the Corinthians even though they were their colonists. In the common festivals they did not give them the customary privileges, nor did they begin by having a Corinthian commence the initial sacrifices, as the other colonies did, but treated them contemptuously.

It was this blow to their dignity, this failure of respect, that produced the hatred which caused the Corinthians to act. No question of economic interest, no requirement of the competition for power, no danger to security, no practical fear, but rather a sense of unrequited grievance and shame provoked them to unleash a terrible war.

If the Corinthians acted out of a sense of honor violated, so too did Mussolini many centuries later when he set out to avenge a defeat suffered by the Italian army at Adowa in Abyssinia—that "shameful scar," in the words of the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio. But Mussolini's Abyssinian campaign of 1935 was undertaken not only for the sake of revenge and to erase a four-decades-old dishonor but in *quest* of something as well: it was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

meant to glorify his Fascist regime and, even more exaltedly, to recapture the ancient glory of the Roman empire.

Throughout the ages, for better and for worse, honor in *this* sense—of fame, glory, renown, and splendor—has likewise motivated decisions about international relations and war and peace. In the heroic world depicted in the *Iliad*, Achilles would rather fight at Troy where he knows he must die than stay safely at home and be immortal, because that would deprive him of the fame and glory that alone make a hero's life worth living. In dynastic ages, sovereigns have risked the prosperity and security of their kingdoms and their persons to achieve glory. In religious eras, crusading monarchs have done the same in the name of true religion.

The 20th century, I would argue, introduced yet a new sense of honor into international relations. World War I effectively put an end to the old dynastic order; thereafter, the struggle would be between increasingly democratic states on the one hand and, on the other, tyrannies or dictatorships of one form or another. The victorious nations in the Great War were themselves democracies, dependent for their legitimacy on the support of the whole people, and this circumstance gave birth to a new set of ideas as to what was honorable in the conduct of nations. War itself, in the new conception, was believed to be *morally* wrong, its causes connected with the aggressiveness natural to authoritarian and despotic regimes. Democracy, by contrast, was right and good in itself and also a force for peace. Over time, the idea took root that the only just war was a war in defense of democracy and self-determination.

WOODROW WILSON was thus not speaking for himself alone when he said that a crucial aim of the Great War had been the defense and extension of democracy. Moreover, in contrast to older coalitions like the Quadruple Alliance of the 19th century, the device Wilson introduced for resisting aggression and keeping the peace—collective security in the form of the League of Nations—was the product not of private negotiations among a few diplomats but of great, open, public discussions, supported by politicians, public associations, and widespread propaganda. Political elites in the democracies might regard all this with cynicism, but they would henceforth need to deal with a public opinion that took it seriously, and that firmly linked the need to resist aggression with the concept of moral honor.

The Western response to Italy's attack on Abyssinia in 1935—itself undertaken, as we have seen, in the name of honor in an older sense—provides a good example of the critical role of honor in the new. Before the Great War it would have been extremely unlikely that a European assault on a weak African nation of no particular value or interest to other European powers would have provoked a meaningful reaction. And even now there was little sentiment within the British government for a strong stand against Italy. Some argued for a prudent, "realist" policy. Such a policy, recognizing British military weakness and the need to hold Mussolini as an ally against Hitler, would be prepared to sacrifice Abyssinia in the name of British national interests.

But as the historian Correlli Barnett has pointed out, this "was 1935, not 1835 or 1735. English foreign policy was no longer a matter simply for the Foreign Secretary or even the Cabinet." By 1935, many British felt they could not ignore the commitment to resist aggression, *whether or not* their country was capable of resisting it effectively. The result was that although Britain's Foreign Minister Samuel Hoare and France's Pierre Laval both felt that no real effort should be made to stop Mussolini, they also sensed that such a decision could not be admitted to the British public. And they were right: the subsequent Hoare-Laval agreement, meant to accommodate the Italian successes in Abyssinia, was greeted in Britain by an outburst of angry disapproval and was widely condemned as a reward for aggression, a blow to the idea of the League, and an act of cowardice. Hoare was forced to resign.

The efforts of Neville Chamberlain two years later to conduct a policy of appeasement based on hard-headed calculations of interest ran into the same new reality, intensified now by the dishonor of 1935 and its consequences. When Chamberlain, speaking to his Cabinet, portrayed England's intended abandonment of Czechoslovakia as a matter of practicality and common sense, one member was indiscreet enough to suggest that the required concessions were "unfair to the Czechs and dishonorable to ourselves." Another compared the present crisis with 1914, when the Germans invaded Belgium: "There was a hard fiber in the British people which did not like to be told that, unless they acquiesced in certain things, it was all up with them." In parliament, the opposition Labor and Liberal parties made their case, as Barnett writes,

> not on strategic grounds, but on the score of morality and ideology. A robber power—and,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what was worse, a Fascist power—had been positively helped by the British government to enlarge itself at the expense of a small country, and, what was worse, a democratic country.

Chamberlain and his colleagues, it is well known, misjudged the true nature of Hitler and the threat that he posed. But they also badly misunderstood the new realities of international relations conducted by democratic nations. Those realities were well and truly grasped by Winston Churchill, who became Britain's new leader after the fall of Norway and Denmark in the spring of 1940 finally forced Chamberlain from office in disgrace. Firmly rejecting a peace offer from the apparently irresistible Hitler, Churchill formulated a policy of resistance that accurately reflected the feelings of most of the British people, who preferred the risks and suffering of a terrible war to the dishonor of a shameful peace with a dictator who personified ideas and institutions that were anathema to them.

Britain's example has had a great influence on Western and especially on American attitudes ever since. The "Munich analogy" was, of course, a major force in shaping the policy of the United States in its confrontation with the Soviet Union. That confrontation was certainly a contest for power, and it certainly included elements of fear and interest, to use Thucydides' categories; one need only mention the fear of nuclear war, and the interest in avoiding it. But no less important was the conflict of values and ideas, in which questions of honor were inextricably entwined.

To most Americans, the Soviet Union was an aggressive, militaristic dictatorship not very different from the ones they had just vanquished in World War II. Not only American security but also decency and honor argued for its containment, if not its defeat. It is impossible to believe that the American people would have accepted compulsory military service, higher taxes to pay for increased armaments, a permanent European alliance, and both the prospect and the reality of actual warfare had they not been motivated by factors that went beyond a conception of their material interest.

To be sure, those same nonmaterialist impulses—passionate anti-Communism, the determination to resist its expansion anywhere in the world, even the intention of defeating it—appalled and alarmed the "realist" sectors of the American foreign-policy establishment, who feared that acting on them would lead to dangerous crusades, an exhaustion of America's resources, or all-out war and mutual annihilation. Arguing from calculations of interest, the realists urged instead that we accept the permanence of world Communism and concentrate on finding areas of mutual accommodation. When, in the wake of America's defeat in Vietnam, the balance of world power seemed to be shifting in favor of the Soviets, realists urged a policy of still greater accommodation; and such a policy, under the name of détente, was in fact put into place by the administration then in Washington.

Unfortunately, détente produced not reciprocal accommodation but more aggressive expansionism on the part of the Soviets, and gains in the arms race that upset the balance of power still further. The aftermath is well known. In the late 1970's, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan helped to galvanize the sentiments of millions of Americans who had long regarded détente not merely as mistaken but as a dishonorable retreat, and to sweep into office a new administration committed to restoring American strength and honor. To the confusion of the realists, Ronald Reagan's determined effort to build up American defenses and consign the "evil empire" to dust was followed neither by American economic implosion nor by suicidal war but by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the discrediting of Communist dictatorship, and the vindication of freedom and democracy.

That happy outcome could never have been achieved merely by the pursuit of what experts considered to be our practical national interests, any more than the persistent and costly policy of global engagement in the early decades after World War II could have been maintained without the commitment of Americans at large to values deeper and more humanly compelling than concern over economic and geopolitical advantage. Realists are quite right to point to the centrality of the contest for power in international relations, and also to the dangers of imprudence and immoderation that can arise from the pursuit of intangible goals like honor. But dangers of a no lesser seriousness attend the competition for power itself, however rationally calculated. Moreover, power is *never* pursued for itself, but always for the sake of some value or values.

In modern democratic states, those values tend to be moral in nature, and to involve a peculiarly democratic conception of honor. To attempt to exclude them from consideration is the height of fantasy, and the opposite of realism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Demjanjuk: A Summing-Up

Joshua Muravchik

On July 29, 1993, the Supreme Court of Israel, reversing a lower court's verdict, acquitted John Demjanjuk of having participated, as "Ivan the Terrible," in the gassing operations at the Nazi death camp of Treblinka. This brought to a climax, but not to an end, a legal saga currently in its 21st year. Demjanjuk, now aged seventy-six, a naturalized American citizen of Ukrainian origin, has resettled quietly in Cleveland while U.S. courts continue to consider whether to enforce the orders of deportation and denaturalization that stand against him even after his acquittal and the vacating of his extradition to Israel.

When the reversal was announced, the conservative magazine *National Review* editorialized that Demjanjuk had, in fact, been "falsely accused" from the beginning—and that Patrick J. Buchanan, who had championed Demjanjuk's cause, "deserves double credit for . . . his attempt to ensure that justice was done." A few months later, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals held that prosecutors in the U.S. Justice Department had committed "fraud on the court" by failing to share some potentially exculpatory material with Demjanjuk's defense. At the same time, Demjanjuk's Israeli attorney, Yoram Sheftel, published his own account of the case, claiming that Demjanjuk had been the "innocent victim of a show trial." Translations of Sheftel's book were soon published in France and England and later in America, where its publisher billed it as "the true story of the infamous show-trial" and as proving "beyond a doubt that John Demjanjuk was not Ivan the Terrible, was innocent of all charges, and never participated in any way in the horror of the Holocaust."*

Let us see.

One of the curiosities of the Demjanjuk case is that it arose from an exercise in Soviet propaganda. It began in 1975, when Soviet authorities, smarting from the worldwide campaign on behalf of Soviet Jewry, furnished a Ukrainian-American Soviet sympathizer with a list of Ukrainian immigrants in the United States who were alleged to have collaborated with the Nazis.

This list, which included the name of Ivan (John) Demjanjuk, was passed along to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Though aware that the Soviet government often manufactured lies, and withheld or doled out information to suit its own purposes, the INS did not simply dismiss all evidence originating within the USSR out of hand, especially when it came to Nazi-related crimes. After all, the murder of European Jewry had been carried out almost entirely in Eastern Europe, and the death camps and

Joshua Muravchik, *a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author, most recently, of* The Imperative of American Leadership. *The present article is based on a study commissioned by the Anti-Defamation League.*

* *Defending "Ivan the Terrible": The Conspiracy to Convict John Demjanjuk*. Regnery, 379 pp., $27.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whatever evidence they contained had been captured at war's end by the Red Army.

Confronted with allegations from Soviet sources, then, the U.S. government took it upon itself to assess the proffered evidence. (As it happens, there seem to be no known instances in which evidence relating to Holocaust crimes was simply manufactured by the Soviets.) Eventually, American authorities initiated action against Demjanjuk and a handful of others on the list, some of whom confessed to the charges against them.

In the course of its investigation, the INS sent nine names to the Israeli police, asking for witnesses—Holocaust survivors—who might be able to identify any of them. The names were accompanied by photographs taken from immigration files, as well as photos of other Ukrainians to serve as "filler." The INS also conveyed the Soviet charges against the nine. Seven of them were accused of crimes committed within Ukraine, for which it would have been hard to find surviving eyewitnesses in Israel. The other two names were those of Feodor Fedorenko, accused of having been a guard at Treblinka, and Ivan Demjanjuk, accused of having been a guard at Sobibor.

The Israeli investigator began by calling in known survivors of Treblinka to see if any could identify Fedorenko. Surprisingly, however, when they were shown the photographs, several Treblinka survivors focused less on Fedorenko than on Demjanjuk. Pointing to his photograph, they said he was the one they had called "*Ivan Grozny*" ("Ivan the Terrible").

This was the nickname given to a Ukrainian guard at Treblinka whose job was to operate the diesel engines feeding exhaust fumes into the gas chambers; within little more than a year, some 800,000 men, women, children, and infants had been murdered in this manner. But Ivan did not get his moniker, "the Terrible," merely for causing so many deaths. In that cauldron of brutality, he had managed to distinguish himself for the sadistic pleasure he took in torturing hapless victims on their way to the chambers and for the perverse indignities he visited upon the Jews who were kept alive to carry the corpses and perform other menial chores in the camp.

The first few times the photo of Demjanjuk was picked out, the Israeli investigator informed the survivor making the identification that he must be mistaken: the man in the photo had been named as a guard at *Sobibor*. But the survivors insisted he had been at Treblinka. Eventually the investigator ceased demurring; in the end, some eighteen separate survivors—as well as one German, a male nurse in the SS who had worked at Treblinka—identified one or another old photograph of Demjanjuk as being that of Ivan of Treblinka. As for the Sobibor survivors, who were fewer in number, *none* of them recognized Demjanjuk's photo.

And yet the Soviet sources had offered nothing to connect Demjanjuk with Treblinka. According to a propagandistic article from the mid-70's in the Soviet Ukrainian press, there were two pieces of evidence against him. One was an identity card that had been issued at the Nazi training camp of Trawniki with an identification number—1393—and entries showing that Demjanjuk had been posted to Sobibor. The other was the testimony of a fellow guard, Ignats Danilchenko, who had stated in "a previous investigation" that he worked with Demjanjuk at Sobibor and later at concentration camps in Flossenburg and Regensburg, Germany. In response to requests from the U.S. Justice Department, which by then had set up an Office of Special Investigation (OSI), the Soviet government produced a photocopy of the identity card and, some time later, the original. It did not produce Danilchenko himself, but in 1979 forwarded his sworn statement reiterating his account of Demjanjuk's activities.

OFFICIALS IN the United States and Israel who were investigating the case thus confronted two sets of evidence. A great many eyewitnesses placed Demjanjuk at Treblinka, while a document, buttressed by an affidavit of uncertain utility, placed him at Sobibor and Trawniki. The two sets of evidence did not make a neat fit; but neither were they irreconcilable.

Treblinka, Sobibor, and Trawniki were in fact related to one another. Each had played a major part in Operation Reinhard, the Nazi plan for exterminating the Jews of Poland. Under this plan, three camps were built: at Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. These were not concentration or labor camps; their only function was annihilation. The Jews who were delivered to them were stripped of their clothing, their belongings, and (in the case of the women) their hair, and marched straight into the gas chambers. Over the eighteen months in which they operated, 600,000 people were murdered at Belzec and 250,000 at Sobibor, in addition to the 800,000 killed at Treblinka. Those who survived were among the tiny fraction mustered out to serve as slaves in the operation of the killing facility.

In addition to these slaves, and the German SS men who were in charge, the manpower essential

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the functioning of the death camps included a third group, the *Wachmänner*, or guards, who did most of the actual killing. It was they who rounded up the Jews in the various ghettos, guarded them in transport to the camps, drove them with whips and clubs to the gas chambers, turned on the gas, shot the ones unable to walk, and supervised the slaves who carried the bodies to pits for burial and burning.

The *Wachmänner*—ethnic Germans, Ukrainians, Russians, Lithuanians, and others—were recruited from among captured Soviet soldiers in German POW camps. They were sent first to Trawniki, a base camp and training center. In addition to staffing the Operation Reinhard death camps, Trawniki-trained *Wachmänner* were also assigned to various other concentration and labor camps.

One part of the Soviet evidence—the Trawniki identity card—could thus be seen to fit well with the eyewitness evidence. Whatever his name in real life, Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka was surely a Trawniki-trained *Wachmann*. What did not fit so well was the entry on the card showing a posting of Ivan Demjanjuk to Sobibor, not Treblinka—an entry corroborated, for what that was worth, by the Danilchenko affidavit. But enabling prosecutors in the United States and later in Israel to reconcile the two sets of evidence was that Demjanjuk's posting to Sobibor was dated March 27, 1943.

Since the vast bulk of the killing at Treblinka was accomplished between July 1942 and January 1943, Demjanjuk could have earned his notoriety as Ivan the Terrible there and then been transferred to Sobibor in March. The two camps were only 100 miles apart, and *Wachmänner* were often transferred. True, some of the witnesses recalled having seen Ivan the Terrible at Treblinka in August 1943, at or about the time of a rebellion by the Jewish inmates; but a last round of gassings was also being carried out at that moment, and Demjanjuk could have been transferred back to finish up the work.

As for why Demjanjuk's identity card failed to list a posting to Treblinka, that might have been due to a simple omission. Danilchenko, after all, had also described other postings, to Flossenburg and Regensburg, neither of which had been entered on the card. Similarly, examination of other identity cards in the course of Demjanjuk's trial in Israel revealed numerous omissions of postings.

IN ADDITION to the Trawniki card and the accounts of various witnesses, Demjanjuk's own statements figured prominently in the proceedings against him in the United States. Much was at stake for him—a possible loss of his American citizenship, deportation, and extradition to Israel—and almost everything turned on his veracity. Had he lied to the United States government when he first applied for immigration in 1951 from a displaced-persons camp in Germany? If so, had he lied in order to hide the fact that he was ineligible to come to this country? And if, as he now asserted, he had never been at Treblinka, Sobibor, or Trawniki, and had never been a *Wachmann*, where had he spent the war?

In the event, Demjanjuk acknowledged that he *had* lied on his immigration application by claiming to have been a resident of Poland from 1934 until 1943 and then to have been deported to Germany and to have spent the rest of the war there. He claimed, however, that so far as the U.S. was concerned, this lie was both innocent and defensible, having been designed to obscure his wartime service in the Red Army, his capture by German forces, and his subsequent enlistment in the anti-Soviet army organized by General Vlasov. In other words, he was trying to avoid being delivered over, like so many other ex-Soviet soldiers, to the tender mercies of Joseph Stalin.

Not so, replied the prosecutors. For when Demjanjuk filled out his immigration application it was at the very height of the cold war, five full years after the U.S. had ceased repatriations. He lied, they said, not to avoid repatriation, of which there was then no danger, but because his true wartime record—as a *Wachmann*—would have rendered him ineligible for immigration.

In listing where he lived in Poland from 1934 through 1943, Demjanjuk had written "Sobibor." Why? In his testimony in U.S. proceedings, Demjanjuk now claimed that while filling out the form, he had asked someone standing nearby for the name of a Polish city and the person read "Sobibor" from a map. In his later testimony in Israel, he said he himself read the name at random from a map. But neither version rang true. Sobibor is little more than a railway junction, altogether absent from many maps and almost invisible where it does appear. After examining the evidence, the Israeli court concluded that "only someone who was at Sobibor could have known this place."

By far the most important question of veracity centered on Demjanjuk's alibi for the period he was alleged to have been a *Wachmann*. There is no dispute about his whereabouts through May 1942, when, a soldier in the Red Army, he was captured by the Germans in the battle of Kerch in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Crimea and interned as a POW at Rovno. But according to Demjanjuk he was then transferred to a POW camp at Chelm where he remained for a large part of the war, eventually being moved to Graz where he enrolled in an anti-Communist Ukrainian division commanded by General Pavlo Shandruk and then to Heuberg where he joined the Russian Liberation Army of General Vlasov.

Neither American nor Israeli courts found this version believable. Chelm was a transit camp at which POW's were supposed to remain only for days or weeks, not the eighteen months to two-and-a-half years Demjanjuk claimed. More importantly, his story did not square with historical facts. Before the court in the United States, he testified that he had been at Chelm until the fall of 1944; but the Red Army drove the Germans from Chelm in June 1944 and the POW camp there had been evacuated by April. In Israel, Demjanjuk altered his story, saying he had left Chelm for Graz, where he joined the Ukrainian division in the spring of 1943; but this version raised still another problem, since the Ukrainian unit was not formed until February *1945*.

In addition, there was Danilchenko's affidavit, which stated that at Flossenburg, he and Demjanjuk had received tattoos indicating their blood type on the inner part of the upper left arm. These tattoos were routinely given to members of the SS and Waffen SS to signify their elite status and to facilitate care if they became wounded. If detected, such a tattoo would have impeded Demjanjuk's immigration to the U.S. Unable to conceal a scar in the indicated place, he acknowledged having had a tattoo, but denied that he got it during service to the SS. Instead, he claimed, it came with enrollment in the Ukrainian division at Graz. He said he gouged it out after joining the Vlasov army a few months later upon noticing that the other men were without this marking—a remarkably thin motive for inflicting so great a self-injury.

NONE OF the courts that have heard Demjanjuk's case, in America or in Israel, has found him credible on his wartime experience. As Judge Thomas Wiseman, Jr., the Special Master appointed by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, stated in his report: "Mr. Demjanjuk's alibi was so incredible as to legitimately raise the suspicions of his prosecutors that he lied about everything."

In contrast, the Treblinka survivors made strong witnesses, who were believed by each court that heard them. And the Trawniki identity card, though attacked as a KGB forgery by Demjanjuk's defenders, was believed as well. In separate proceedings, American and Israeli government forensic specialists examined this document, performed physical analyses of the paper and ink, and found it authentic.

The combination of survivor testimony, the Trawniki card, and Demjanjuk's own improbable version of events is what caused the U.S. district court to revoke his citizenship in 1981 and led to the order to deport and extradite him to Israel, where, after a trial that lasted over a year and was an international sensation, he was convicted in 1988 as Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka. The appeals process took another five years, mostly because of requests for delays from Demjanjuk's side, before he was acquitted by the Israel Supreme Court.

What caused the reversal? Unlike its American counterpart, the Israel Supreme Court considers new evidence on appeal, and as the Iron Curtain crumbled, Demjanjuk's defenders searched in heretofore inaccessible places for exculpatory material. Meanwhile, the Israeli prosecution was searching, too, and some documents *it* uncovered led, paradoxically, to Demjanjuk's acquittal.

Specifically, in a Ukrainian state archive a set of confessions was found from a postwar interrogation of Ukrainian *Wachmänner* who had served at Treblinka and were then captured or arrested by Soviet forces. Many described a colleague named Ivan *Marchenko* as one of two operators of the Treblinka gas engines; some identified him from the photo on his Trawniki card.

These documents raised the possibility that Demjanjuk had been wrongly identified as Ivan the Terrible. But they existed in a vacuum. Both the interrogators and their interviewees were long since dead, and no one could authenticate the records or vouch for how they had been handled over the intervening decades, let alone verify the circumstances under which the confessions had been elicited. To confuse matters still further, Demjanjuk himself had given Marchenko as his mother's maiden name, both on a 1948 sworn statement substituting for a birth certificate and on his 1951 immigration application. His attorneys now produced evidence showing that this, too, had been a deliberate falsification on his part; but if so, it only strengthened the point that Marchenko was a name Demjanjuk sometimes used.

The Israel Supreme Court nevertheless decided that these documents, although not admissible before most courts, could not be ignored, and that the doubts they raised were sufficient to overturn the conviction of Demjanjuk as Ivan the Terrible.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Could his conviction be allowed to stand, then, solely on the fact that he had been a *Wachmann* at Sobibor? The Supreme Court said no, because this issue had been scanted in the trial. It also refused to allow the Sobibor charges to be brought *de novo*, on the grounds that Demjanjuk had already been imprisoned in Israel for seven years and it would be unreasonable to start new proceedings against him. But there was a deep irony here—or, rather, a set of ironies. For, as the court noted, the same document search that saved Demjanjuk on the Treblinka counts strengthened the case that he had served at Sobibor.

A list of Trawniki men detailed to Sobibor was found in Russian archives at Saratov. Dated March 26, 1943, the day before the Sobibor entry on Demjanjuk's own card, it included his name, place and date of birth, and identification number. A transfer order found in another Russian archive, this one dated October 1, 1943, listed Trawniki men posted to Flossenburg and again included Demjanjuk as well as Danilchenko, giving their identification numbers and dates and places of birth. And a memo found in a state archive in Vilnius, Lithuania, ordering punishment of four Trawniki *Wachmänner* for going AWOL one evening, once again included Demjanjuk's name and number.

Ukrainian archives also yielded a transcript of a confession similar to the ones that had cast doubt on Demjanjuk's presence at Treblinka. This one was also by Danilchenko, but it was dated 1949, 30 years before the similar affidavit produced by the Soviets. In 1949, Danilchenko was apparently asked by his interrogators to name and describe his fellow *Wachmänner*. He listed ten, of whom Demjanjuk was one. At Sobibor, he said, "I saw Demjanjuk, armed with a rifle, . . . guarding prisoners in all areas of the camp, from the unloading platform to the entrance into the gas chamber." And he added: "Demjanjuk was considered to be an experienced and efficient guard. For example, he was repeatedly assigned by the Germans to get Jews in surrounding ghettos and deliver them in trucks to the camp to be killed."

True, each of these documents came from some part of the former Soviet Union, but Demjanjuk's defense could not reasonably continue to claim that the evidence against him had been forged by the KGB. For the KGB would have had to have forged each of the various documents and left them moldering in archives dispersed among the Soviet republics throughout more than a decade of Demjanjuk's legal proceedings, only to have them discovered (along with exculpatory documents) when the Soviet state disappeared.

The final nail in the coffin of the Demjanjuk conspiracy theory was provided by two separate documents discovered in West German archives in Koblenz. Both of them listed Demjanjuk as having been in the Flossenburg concentration camp in 1944, and one included his identification number as well as Danilchenko's name and number, along with those of another *Wachmann* named in Danilchenko's 1949 confession. Thus was Danilchenko's account confirmed from sources outside as well as inside the former Soviet Union.

IN SHORT, the evidence that Demjanjuk served as a *Wachmann* at Trawniki, Sobibor, and Flossenburg was and remains quite persuasive. In addition to the identity card, at least one other document puts him at Sobibor and at least four put him at Trawniki, while at least three put him at Flossenburg after Sobibor. All these documents are mutually consistent and all bear Demjanjuk's telltale identification number. On every verifiable point, Danilchenko's testimony—which once seemed the weakest link in the evidentiary chain—has proved accurate, just as Demjanjuk's own testimony has again and again proved inaccurate.

And that is another irony of this case. While the evidence of the survivors, furnished from the purest of motives, stands in question, the Soviet evidence, furnished undoubtedly for reasons of propaganda, has stood up well. Indeed, the case most closely linked to Demjanjuk's, that of Feodor Federenko, had its own tortuous unfolding in American courts, with Federenko eventually confessing to having been a *Wachmann* at Treblinka—just as the Soviets said he was. Following that confession, Federenko was extradited to the USSR, where he was executed. Had Demjanjuk not been accused of being Ivan the Terrible, he would probably have undergone a similar fate. For while it is unlikely that Israel, which had not tried a Nazi war criminal since Adolf Eichmann, would have asked for his extradition on the basis of his presence at Sobibor alone, the Soviet Union would almost certainly have done so.

Is John Demjanjuk Ivan the Terrible? We may never know. If he is not, then justice of a sort has been done through his acquittal by the Israel Supreme Court. But that acquittal hardly makes him "an innocent victim," as his defenders would have it, much less a martyr. Far from it. That he served the SS and assisted in unspeakable crimes against humanity—of that, there can be no doubt.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

O, Brother!

Joseph Epstein

THE FINAL quarter of the 20th century has not been kind to Big Ideas, especially those that set out, scientifically, to explain all of human nature. When the Berlin Wall fell, Marxism went down in the dust with it; now, only Western academics have the empty luxury of still believing it is a useful guide to understanding. If Vienna had the equivalent of a Berlin Wall, it, too, could now be considered fallen, for Freudianism, despite its continuing influence in the general culture, has also come tumbling down. Today the official line is that psychoanalysis is not really a science after all, but rather an art—comparable, one wants to ask, to flower arrangement or macramé?

Not that these intellectual failures are likely to stop anyone from demanding more. Vast numbers of people seem to have a sharp appetite for large, unitary theories that profess to give meaning and, better, drama to their lives. A big idea, preferably one that spins off lots of lesser ideas into an ideational system, makes sense out of a welter of experience that might otherwise seem arbitrary and chaotic. "Human kind cannot bear very much reality," T. S. Eliot wrote in *Burnt Norton*, and one of the ways it can shield itself is by means of a fine, new, lustrous, overarching idea.

Darwinism—though itself currently embroiled in scientific and intellectual controversy—has begun to stretch its ample hand to the study of human nature, possibly in the hope of sweeping up some of the chips left on the table by Freudianism and Marxism, those departed players. Evolutionary psychology, which derives from evolutionary biology, first made a large claim for attention in the 1970's in the body of theoretical observations that went by the name of sociobiology. But sociobiology never quite caught on; its theory seemed too complex, and its conclusions about the stubborn persistence of inherited traits ran too much against the liberal spirit of the day. At Harvard, in fact, a number of left-wing scientists fought against the leading theorists of sociobiology, themselves also members of the Harvard faculty, to the point of trying to suppress their research findings.

Times have changed, however, and no one is likely to attempt to suppress the findings of a more congenial effort to extend Darwinism into the sphere of human nature that has now arisen in the form of an extraordinary book by Frank J. Sulloway titled *Born to Rebel: Birth Order, Family Dynamics, and Creative Lives.** Scientists, social scientists, and historians of science, among them such luminaries as Ernst Mayr, I. Bernard Cohen, Edward O. Wilson, and Robert K. Merton, have lined up to praise this work as "a mas-

JOSEPH EPSTEIN, *a long-time contributor to* COMMENTARY, *is the editor of the* American Scholar. *He is the author of nine books of essays and a collection of short stories.*

* Pantheon, 653 pp., $30.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terpiece," a book that "changes a whole field of scholarship," a "magnificent intellectual accomplishment," and—most sweepingly of all—a book that "will have the same kind of long-term impact as Freud's and Darwin's." It need only be added that Sulloway's publisher paid an advance of a half-million dollars on this book, which at the very least suggests an expectation that the author's research will capture the attention of a wide public.

PUT IN a single, simple sentence, the thesis of *Born to Rebel* is that sibling arrangements—and by extension sibling rivalry—are the driving force behind human history. The phrase "sibling rivalry" suggests Freud, but Freud, it turns out, is far from being the hero of the story that Sulloway, a research scholar at MIT, has to tell. His protagonist, the genius of geniuses, is Charles Darwin. For what siblings are rivalrous about in Sulloway's reading is survival, with each struggling for a niche in the family into which he has been born. Behind the rivalry, setting it up, is birth order. More potently than any other factor, Sulloway argues, the order in which we are born into a family forms and fixes us, assigning us not only our personality but our politics and even, quite possibly, our sex lives. As Sulloway writes:

> Siblings compete with one another to secure physical, emotional, and intellectual resources from parents. Depending on differences in birth order, gender, physical traits, and aspects of temperament, siblings create differing roles for themselves within the family system. These differing roles in turn lead to disparate ways of currying parental favor.

Born to Rebel is a book with more apparatus than a Houston training gym for young Olympic hopefuls. With its numerous charts, graphs, and appendices, its 75-page bibliography, 93 pages of closely printed footnotes, and five pages of acknowledgments, the book represents more than 26 years of continuous research. To compile his "database," Sulloway claims to have studied 6,000 lives in Western history, with a special concentration on the biographies of scientists as well as artists and statesmen. The MacArthur Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and other such institutions chipped in on the action as underwriters. Frank Sulloway does not come out of nowhere.

He would, though, lead us to think that his findings do. "At the outset of this study," Sulloway writes, "my goal was to explain just one aspect of human behavior—the propensity to rebel. Nothing prepared me for what I encountered." I am not so sure he was unprepared. But before delving into Sulloway's preconceptions, let us consider what he found.

FIRST AMONG his discoveries is that throughout history, firstborn children have tended to be preservers of the status quo, both worshipful of authority and authoritative themselves. Laterborn children, by contrast, have always exhibited a much greater openness to experience and have been more likely to give themselves to radical causes. The reason for this is, again, Darwinian. Firstborns have primary call on their parents' love and protection—a call that, among firstborn males, was once given legal reinforcement through primogeniture but that in any case reinforces an appreciation for things as they are. The problem for laterborns is how to win a share of their parents' love and concern and thus ensure their own survival. It is through their complex Darwinian struggle for survival, their efforts to find a niche in the family economy, that laterborns, of necessity, open themselves to newness.

Appropriately enough for a Darwinian book, *Born to Rebel* begins by taking up the reception accorded the discoveries of Charles Darwin, himself the fifth child in a family of six. (Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-discoverer of natural selection, was also the fifth-born of six.) What Sulloway finds impressive is that the vast majority of scientists who *accepted* Darwin's theory were themselves laterborns, while firstborns could be depended upon to be in opposition, with such biologists as Louis Agassiz and Georges Cuvier leading the way. Sulloway even stipulates that the reason evolutionary theory was slow to gain acceptance in France was that in that country, with its low birth rate, the number of scientists who were firstborns was higher than usual.

What is true of Darwinism is true, in Sulloway's reading, of other radical scientific theories as well: laterborns "have been 3.1 times more likely than firstborns to lend their support" to such theories. As Sulloway puts it in one of his sweeping pronouncements, "The likelihood of this finding arising by chance is less than one in a billion billion"; as he puts it in another, "There are no Radical Revolutions [in science] backed by firstborns." The same goes, in politics, for the response to the Reformation and the French Revo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lution. In America, laterborns were in the vanguard of the movement to abolish slavery.

In sum, Sulloway writes, "few aspects of human behavior can claim such generalizability [as birth order] across class, nationality, gender, and time." Birth-order differences are ahistorical—"just as substantial" in the 20th century as centuries ago. The import of all this is colossal. Darwinian theory, put to the study of birth order, "illuminates," in Sulloway's estimation, "the *ultimate* causes of behavior."

Frank Sulloway is not the first person to find significance in birth order. It has been the subject of study for more than a century, and probably gained its widest currency in the writing of the psychologist Alfred Adler. As it happens, Adler held very different views from Sulloway, believing that firstborn children are "dethroned" by laterborns. But Sulloway is less interested in knocking down Adler's theories than in disqualifying Marxism and Freudianism as important rival explanations of human behavior, and in establishing incontrovertible scientific proof for his own findings. Though he enters an early disclaimer—"individual behavior needs to be explained as the product of complex interactions between proximate and ultimate causes"—his so-called "interactionist perspective" reveals precious little interaction. The greater part of Sulloway's book is an elaborate, complex, and really quite relentless systematic study not of "proximate causes" but of his one "ultimate cause."

In pursuit of this objective, Sulloway finds himself having to make endless cuts and distinctions, and construct types and categories. He differentiates among kinds of revolutions—radical, conservative, technical, and so forth—and among kinds of revolutionaries. He sketches five major personality dimensions (extroversion, agreeableness/antagonism, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience). He factors in such matters as parental conflict; considers the special instances of twins; creates groupings of "functional" as opposed to actual firstborns and laterborns; takes up the question of shyness; "controls" for social attitudes, for age spacing between siblings, and for much else.

Above all, like the one-armed paper-hanger of old, he rushes around attempting to deal with exceptions to his general theory. Somehow, he always manages to explain them away. How is it, for example, that so many *firstborns* seem to have played leading roles in revolutionary scientific thought—Galileo, Kepler, Leibniz, Newton, Luther, Lavoisier, Freud, and Einstein among them? Well, Galileo's father had himself been something of a radical in his musical theories, so that counts for something. Kepler's difficult childhood—he despised his parents—made him other than a normal firstborn. Newton was raised by his grandparents. Freud, on the other hand, did exhibit the typical firstborn's aggressiveness and need for dominance, but then—aha!—the movement that carries his name was not really a radical revolution, only a technical one. And so on.

In revolutionary politics, too, seeming exceptions only prove the rule. Marat, Robespierre, Saint-Just, firstborns all, were French revolutionaries, granted, but *within* the Revolution they were the merciless and inflexible executors of a radical movement initiated, appropriately and predictably, by laterborns. Hitler? He, it seems, was a laterborn, his father's third child; yet he was also, more significantly, "his mother's first surviving child, and she strongly favored him over two older stepchildren"—in other words, a "functional" firstborn. *Q.E.D.*

This brings us to Sulloway's choice of terms. "'Facts,' in science," he writes in a revealing passage, "do not speak for themselves but assume their meaning based on theoretical and ideological commitments. The practice and the beliefs of scientists are embedded in a greater social context."

Well put—particularly if we include Sulloway himself in the ranks of such scientists. For when he comes to generalize his birth-order differences, the psychological profiles that emerge seem to take their meaning from his own "theoretical and ideological commitments." In his scheme, firstborns tend to be "ambitious, conscientious, and achievement-oriented." But before concluding that these are good things, note, please, that firstborns also tend to be "more conforming, conventional, and defensive," as well as, for good measure, more "dominant, aggressive, . . . jealous, and conservative." Laterborns, on the other hand, tend to be more flexible and tolerant as well as "more altruistic, empathetic, and peer-oriented," more adventurous—more inclined to engage in contact sports, foreign travel, exploration—and more sympathetic to underdogs.

Throughout *Born to Rebel*, in short, chiefly pejorative qualities are assigned to firstborns and chiefly approbative qualities to laterborns. Make no mistake, *Born to Rebel* is a book with heroes and villains, and Sulloway, for all his scientific preten-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sion, chooses sides. In this book, if you are a firstborn, or if you can be made to seem a firstborn, you cannot win. Say this much for Darwin: he, I do not believe, favored one finch over another.

DESPITE ALL the praise that has been bestowed on *Born to Rebel* by eminent scientists, it has also come under some attack. Its research methods have been impugned. It has been criticized for picking its categories and making its distinctions—some of them rather crucial distinctions—arbitrarily. I would only underscore that the arbitrariness is almost always in the service of an ideology. In Frank Sulloway we are dealing with an idea-logue, a single-causer, a man with an extraordinarily large bee in rather a small bonnet.

The buzzing we hear is partly political in the conventional sense: left-wing good, right-wing bad. Partly, too, it has to do with Sulloway's campaign against other scientific ideas and methodologies. Sometimes, these two predispositions clash; when that happens, lines can get oddly crossed and switched, if not altogether short-circuited, and the results can even be amusing. Sulloway attacks the personality and temperament of the anthropologist Margaret Mead, a firstborn who with her mentor Franz Boas made the mistake of emphasizing culture over biology in explaining human behavior, but says nothing about her clearly laterborn politics. And what to do with John Stuart Mill, a firstborn who, in *On Liberty*, wrote a laterborn work of political theory if ever there was one? He simply goes unmentioned.*

But the real ideological fixation in this book is on the virtual infallibility of Darwinian biology as the determinant of human behavior. Unlike Marx, who foolishly gives pride of place to social class, and unlike Freud, in his mistaken preoccupation with the individual's psychic history, Sulloway relentlessly insists that sibling strife and the struggle for parental favor always and forever lie at the heart of things. Yes, he concedes, there is context, "with all of its rich social, political, religious, and intellectual features," and context can be crucial, if not indeed "the key to how personality ultimately expresses itself." But when all his qualifications are over, birth order remains architectonic. Rivalry within the family is the forcing house of personality, the prime mover of history, the whole-earth catalogue of human endeavor.

Here, over the issue of what the *New Yorker* writer Robert S. Boynton, in an otherwise friendly profile, calls Sulloway's "quality of exaggerated rationality," is where I chiefly bail out. The main point of *Born to Rebel* is that birth order is destiny—if not entirely (remember those "proximate causes"), then pretty nearly so. But if we know anything at all about exceptional people, about those who defy received opinion, about those who rebel, it is that they struggle to *elude* their presumably foreordained destiny, as well as every presumption about human nature. What is interesting about such people, moreover, is not whatever they may have in common with other "rebels" but what is specific to themselves—their undetermined, finally undeterminable, character.

Frank Sulloway may be very knowledgeable and learned and well-informed, but when it comes to the formation of human character, he is neither understanding nor wise. For as Isaiah Berlin has written in an essay entitled "The Sense of Reality,"

> what makes men foolish or wise, understanding or blind, as opposed to knowledgeable or learned or well-informed, is the perception of [the] unique flavors of each situation as it is, in its specific differences—of that in it wherein it differs from all other situations, that is, those aspects of it which make it insusceptible to scientific treatment, because it is that element in it which no generalization, because it is a generalization, can cover.

"He had a mind so fine," T. S. Eliot wrote of Henry James, "that no idea could violate it." By this lovely, lilting sentence Eliot did not in any way mean that James was not in possession of ideas, or capable of mastering them—he was, after all, the second (laterborn) brother of William James, and quite unlike any other the world has seen—but that he never felt the really important truths were to be found in big or any other ideas. Nothing, I suppose, will ever stop people from wanting large-scale, preferably universal, explanations of human behavior. But human behavior, contradictory, varied, rich, heroic, comic, sad, vicious, dignified, ridiculous, magnificent, and mysterious, will never submit.

"The part of the inexplicable should be allowed for in appraising the conduct of men in a world where no explanation is final," Joseph Conrad wrote. Henry James, almost in concert, added, "Never say you know the last word about any human heart"—not even firstborn, middleborn, or laterborn hearts.

* *Lingua Franca*, a magazine devoted to academic life, has wickedly reported that both Noam Chomsky and Edward Said, charter radicals though they be, are firstborns, while Charles Murray, one of the Left's arch-villains, is a lastborn. Go, as they say, figure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OBSERVATIONS

Marketing the "New Middle East"

Eliyahu Kanovsky

WHEN ISRAEL and the PLO concluded the Oslo accords in 1993, more than a few people expressed great enthusiasm over the economic dividends that would assuredly flow from the dawning of a new era of cooperation in the Middle East. Leading the chorus of optimism was Israel's Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, who foresaw the establishment of something akin to a European-style common market. Giving peace a chance, Peres argued, would allow the countries of the region to cut defense expenditures, allocate additional funds to civilian purposes, and join together to carry out projects in infrastructure, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, and other fields. Israelis would hardly be the only beneficiaries of this expanding trade and rapid economic growth; many millions of Arabs would have access to better-paying jobs, improved health care and education, and rising living standards. Thanks to this economic resurgence, in turn, the constituencies for peace within the Arab world would vastly increase, thus signaling an end to the long cycles of violence and despair.

Almost four years have now passed since Oslo. With so many issues still unresolved between Israel and its Arab neighbors, some might contend that it is too soon to say whether this vision of a "new Middle East"—which was hardly Peres's alone—is realistic or not. Certainly, though, there has been no diminution of official enthusiasm for the twinned ideas that the way to cement peace in the Middle East is by encouraging prosperity, and the way to encourage prosperity is by cementing the peace. "Trade and investment are the essential foundations to undergird the peace process," declared Stuart Eizenstat, Undersecretary for International Trade in the U.S. State Department, not long ago.

Is there anything to this?

Any serious analysis of the prospects for Arab-Israeli economic cooperation and integration must begin with one fundamental fact: a tremendous gulf separates Israel from the Arab states on its borders. In its immediate neighborhood, Israel is an economic superpower, in comparison with which Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and the emerging Palestinian state range from supplicants to mendicants to indigents to paupers.

The Egyptian economy, to start with, is mired in stasis and poverty. Egypt's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of $1,020 is approximately fifteen times lower than Israel's $15,650 (1995 figures). Unemployment, according to the World Bank, exceeds 17 percent, and nearly three quarters of the unemployed are under the age of twenty, a statistic particularly troubling because of the lure of Islamic fundamentalism among the young.

Egypt's dismal economic performance is a legacy of the "Arab socialism" embraced under Nasser's tutelage in the 1960's and from which the country has never been able to wrestle free. The state remains in control of key sectors, including industry and banking. Though a policy of privatization—

ELIYAHU KANOVSKY, *a new contributor, is a senior research associate at Bar-Ilan University in Israel and the Ludwig Jesselson Visiting Professor of Economics at Yeshiva University in New York.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strongly urged by outside aid donors like the International Monetary Fund and the United States—has been officially adopted, it has been resisted by powerful interest groups. The government, fearing the social consequences of laying off tens of thousands of workers in bloated state-run enterprises, has dragged its heels.

What is worse, the Egyptian authorities have for many years chosen to use the already massive civil-service bureaucracy to soak up surplus labor. While this may reduce one obvious source of danger to the regime, its economic effects are lethal. A massive, utterly incompetent and corrupt regulatory apparatus straddles the economy, raising consumption while inhibiting production and draining the treasury. Without a radical change of direction, the Egyptian economy will remain consigned to failure. But radical change, the authorities clearly calculate, is too dangerous a path on which to embark. On the horns of this dilemma the Egyptian economy—as well as Egypt itself—is impaled.

THE PICTURE is only moderately better in Jordan. From half to two-thirds of the country's labor force is employed directly by the government. Official reports place the unemployment rate at 15 to 20 percent; unofficial estimates are considerably higher. Jordan was particularly hard hit by the economic effects of the Gulf war, losing revenues from the transit of Iraqi goods through its port of Aqaba and remittances from Palestinians laboring in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Despite respectable economic growth in the early 1990's, living standards have been in a steady decline, falling a staggering 50 percent (according to one Jordanian economist) over the past ten years.

In Syria, which, like Egypt, is a "beneficiary" of Arab socialism, things are considerably worse. According to one estimate, about 65 percent of the population lives below the official poverty line. As elsewhere, the public sector is predominant, and though the government has spoken of encouraging private enterprise, it continues its old-style policies of multiple exchange rates and preferential treatment for the swollen and corrupt state-run economy. Even if Syria's strongman, Hafez al-Assad, became serious about economic reform, shifting course would be a politically explosive task, bound to precipitate formidable internal strife.

Lebanon, now under Syrian control, is the only one of Israel's neighbors that can boast of economic success—but unfortunately, that success was in the past. Before it was ravaged by civil war, Lebanon had a thriving market economy and enjoyed, among other things, status as the banking center of the Middle East, with oil-rich Arabs using it as a safe haven for their funds. All that, of course, came to an end with the decade and a half of conflict that began in 1975 and ended in 1990 when Assad enforced a cease-fire among the warring factions. Though reconstruction is now under way, per-capita GDP remains a fraction of Israel's. With Syria managing Lebanon's affairs through the barrel of a gun, and Iranian-funded guerrilla groups still marauding in its south, the country's prospects—economic no less than political—remain clouded at best.

OF ISRAEL'S close neighbors, however, the one in the worst economic shape of all is the emerging Palestinian state in the "autonomous areas." In the wake of the Oslo agreements, the major industrial countries pledged $2.4 billion in foreign aid over five years to Yasir Arafat's Palestinian Authority (PA). Though overall aid funds have already exceeded this original commitment, the economy has nevertheless spiraled downward. In the four years since Oslo, GDP per capita has plunged, according to a UN estimate, from $1,800 to $800 per annum in the West Bank and from $1,200 to $700 in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian officials themselves put unemployment at 38 percent in the West Bank and a stunning 51 percent in Gaza, figures which they of course attribute to Israel's periodic border closures and its effort to bring in temporary substitutes for Palestinian labor from Eastern Europe and Asia. But while these policies undoubtedly have had a deleterious effect, the economic debacle is mostly the consequence of other factors.

As is the case in Jordan, a cut in the flow of remittances from the Persian Gulf, along with the return of unemployed Palestinian expatriates, has taken a toll on both income and employment levels in areas under the control of the PA. But of even greater significance is the widespread mismanagement and corruption within the PA itself. Little more than token portions of the billions in foreign-assistance funds provided by the industrialized West have been used to develop infrastructure or to stimulate private investment. Instead, vast sums have been diverted into private hands. What the PA does manage to keep for public purposes goes to current expenditures, in particular the salaries of 26,500 civil servants as well as the 45,000 soldiers who staff ten different police and security services—"the highest police-per-citizen ratio in the world," as one lawyer in Gaza was quoted in the *Economist*. If recent trends continue, Gaza will also soon have one of the lowest per-capita-income ratios in the world.*

WHAT DOES the huge and growing disparity between Israel and its neighbors mean? For one thing, there is little room for any significant near-term growth in trade.

* For a more extended discussion of the economic and political situation in the West Bank and Gaza, see "In Arafat's Kingdom" by Nadav Haetzni in the October 1996 COMMENTARY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The backbone of the Israeli economy is manufacturing, with high technology its most rapidly growing component. The primary market for Israel's output is the industrialized West and to a lesser extent the thriving economies of Asia and Latin America. While some speak yearningly of millions of Arab consumers eagerly awaiting Israeli products, the relevant factor in assessing the prospects for trade is not the raw quantity of potential buyers but purchasing power. And it is in purchasing power that the Arab world is critically deficient. Over the past three years, tiny Holland (population fifteen million) imported far more goods than all twenty Arab states combined (population 250 million).

Unlike the oil states of the Persian Gulf—which even with their great wealth have run into serious financial difficulties of their own—Israel's immediate neighbors are particularly unattractive as potential customers. Not only do they lack the wherewithal to buy goods from abroad, they also have little to sell. Egypt's commodity exports in 1995 were $4 billion; Syria's, $3.8 billion; and Jordan's, $1.2 billion. By contrast, minuscule Israel's were $19 billion, of which the lion's share was made up of manufactured goods destined for Europe and the United States.

THIS IS not to say that richer and poorer countries cannot find mutually advantageous ways to trade. They can, and in the years since the Camp David accords of 1979, Israel and some of its neighbors have found opportunities from which to profit. But this brings us back to what is perhaps the major fallacy in the "new Middle East" version of things—namely, the notion that commercial ties will serve to lubricate the wheels of political relations. In fact the opposite has been occurring, and for obvious reasons.

A good many Arab leaders, intellectuals, and economists fear and resent Israel's economic power, and point to it as yet another thorn being thrust by the Jewish state into the Arab side. Some of these Arab fears stem from garden-variety protectionism. Thus, the Crown Prince of Jordan has argued for sustaining the Arab boycott of Israel, because ending it would be "economic suicide." Ghassan Ayache, former deputy governor of Lebanon's central bank, complains that after the 1982 war in that country, "Our markets were flooded with Israeli goods, and our local products could not stand up."

But some Arab resentments are more explicitly political in coloration. Among Palestinians, for instance, there is widespread suspicion of Israeli economic "imperialism"; in the words of one former high-ranking official in Israel's last Labor government, Palestinians "see their former occupiers plotting to perpetuate economic control after withdrawal." Similar sentiments are common in Egypt. One prominent Egyptian economist recently expressed the view that the establishment of a free-trade zone in the region would reinforce Israel's "hegemonic dominance." Other Egyptian public figures go much farther. According to the *Economist*, "scarcely a month goes by without some parliamentarian accusing Israel of exporting poisoned food products to Egypt."

With such feelings in the air, an expansion of Arab-Israeli trade and the initiation of joint ventures might easily backfire. As one student of Middle Eastern affairs, Patrick Clawson, has pointed out, "Financial disputes have been an irritant in joint international projects around the world, even when the countries involved are on good terms; they are likely to be all the worse when the partners start out being suspicious of each other." Moreover, whatever steps Arab countries might take in order to become serious trading partners will entail severe social costs at home, including unemployment and rising prices for subsidized commodities. The resulting unrest leads shaky regimes to seek scapegoats—usually Zionists and Israel—for their internal woes. The process is occurring not only in Egypt (where, among other things, an Israeli businessman is now to be put on trial as a spy) but in such famously moderate countries as Morocco. Indeed, it is happening everywhere in the Arab world where economic-liberalization policies, however limited and tentative, are being pursued.

IF NOT much trade is likely to materialize, and if the little that does materialize is unlikely to serve as a solid foundation for improved political relations, is there a chance that peace will at least permit a sizable reduction in military expenditures? Hardly. As the economic analyst Peter Kemp has written, "rather than delivering a dividend, peace seems destined to come at a price, with at least as much if not more being spent on defense for many years to come."

It is not difficult to understand why this should be so. With its narrowing geographical profile and always vulnerable population centers, Israel, for one, could not afford to be militarily unprepared if a revolution or a coup d'état or a change of heart somewhere in the Arab world were to cause peace to break down. And as for the Arabs, though the Arab-Israeli conflict makes headlines across the world, it is by no means the only conflict in the Middle East.

With Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Libya all led by brutal dictators, with enormous stockpiles of modern weaponry in place, with nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare a growing possibility, and with all of the states of the Arab world afflicted by varying degrees of instability, no country in the region is about to let down its guard. King Hussein of Jordan has put it well: "Our problem is not one particular frontier but all of them."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IN SUM, the economic problems that bedevil the Arab world, and that have led country after country into financial ruin, have little or nothing to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict, and they will persist with or without the formal conclusion of peace agreements. The governments that have repeatedly plunged their countries into terrible wars are the same governments that have mismanaged their own economies, and that have squandered natural resources and human capital with abandon. What is required for prosperity—and, for that matter, peace—is a decisive change in the nature of those regimes: in a word, democratization. Until that miracle occurs, there will be no "new Middle East."

DANCE

Choreography by Jerome Robbins

Terry Teachout

FIFTY-THREE years ago this month, the curtain went up on *Fancy Free*, the first ballet by a twenty-five-year-old dancer from New York named Jerome Robbins. There had never been anything quite like it. At a time when classical dance in America was still dominated by foreign-born performers, choreographers, and impresarios, *Fancy Free* dealt with a contemporary American subject (three sailors on shore leave in Manhattan), featured the jazz-flavored music of a contemporary American composer (Leonard Bernstein, fresh from his conducting debut with the New York Philharmonic), and made convincingly idiomatic use of the steps of American popular dance.

The premiere of *Fancy Free*, which received 25 curtain calls, made Robbins a star overnight. Eight months later, he and Bernstein joined forces again for *On the Town*, a musical, based loosely on the same ballet, which ran for 463 performances and was filmed by MGM. Within a few years, Robbins had become both the most powerful musical-comedy director on Broadway and the most famous ballet choreographer in America. In 1969, he left Broadway to become co-ballet master-in-chief of George Balanchine's New York City Ballet (NYCB), where he remains active to this day. His latest ballet was premiered in January, and a revival of *West Side Story* (1957, music by Bernstein) incorporating his original dances is now touring the East Coast.

Robbins's name is often linked with that of Bernstein, and indeed the two had much in common beyond the shared triumphs of their youth. Like Bernstein, Robbins was Jewish, homosexual, and involved in radical politics, going so far as to join a Communist group during World War II. (In 1953, six years after having broken with the party, he named the members of the group to the House Un-American Activities Committee [HUAC].) Both men moved freely between the worlds of high and popular culture; both also regularly produced "serious" works which were dismissed by many critics as shallow and pretentious. And both, despite their critics, were vastly successful with audiences of all kinds: no American artists working in the field of high culture have been better known to the public at large.

But Robbins's fame, unlike that of his flamboyant collaborator, is

TERRY TEACHOUT, COMMENTARY'S *music critic, covers ballet and modern dance for the* New York Daily News.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

based solely on his work, not his life. He rehearses behind closed doors and rarely gives interviews; no book has yet been written about him, and while he is known to be a demanding taskmaster, dancers' memoirs have typically been circumspect in commenting on his character. He has never discussed his homosexuality publicly, or commented on his still-controversial decision to "name names."

Critics have long been sharply divided over Robbins. Some, including most notably the *New Yorker*'s Arlene Croce, believe him to have been at his best on Broadway and in such lighter dances as *Fancy Free* and *Afternoon of a Faun* (1953, music by Debussy). For these critics, his more ambitious later efforts, like *Dances at a Gathering* (1969, music by Chopin) and *The Goldberg Variations* (1971, music by Bach), while not without interest, cannot bear serious comparison to the ballets of his colleague George Balanchine, the foremost choreographer of the 20th century. Yet Robbins also has his staunch supporters, among them the *New York Post*'s Clive Barnes, who has called him "the greatest American-born classicist."

Which—if either—of these views is correct?

THE DIRECTOR of *West Side Story* was born Jerome Rabinowitz in New York in 1918, the second child of parents who had come to America to escape the pogroms of Russia and Poland. After growing up in New Jersey, and spending a year as a chemistry major at New York University, Robbins dropped out of college to study dance and acting. Between 1937 and 1940 he appeared in the choruses of four Broadway musicals and performed summers at Camp Tamiment, a socialist-owned resort in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains, alongside the comedians Imogene Coca and Danny Kaye.

In 1940 Robbins joined Ballet Theater (now American Ballet Theater). There he studied with Eugene Loring, who had collaborated with Aaron Copland in 1938 on *Billy the Kid*, among the first ballets on an American theme, and with the English-born choreographer Antony Tudor, famed for such "psychological" dances as *Pillar of Fire* and *Undertow*. He also learned the title role of *Petrushka* from Michel Fokine, who had originated that famous ballet for Serge Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. Robbins's appearances as Petrushka in 1943 were favorably noticed by critics, clearing the way the following year for him to choreograph a dance of his own in which he could also star. The result was *Fancy Free*.

From the first entrance of the three sailors, who come cartwheeling on stage to the sound of four rim shots on a snare drum, *Fancy Free* offered a synthesis of ballet and popular dance which was astonishingly self-assured—especially for a twenty-five-year-old novice—and which, a half-century later, remains as fresh and vital as Leonard Bernstein's superb score. At the same time, *Fancy Free* was very much a *theater* piece: the story is told through pantomime, and each of the performers is clearly differentiated as a character.

This was a quality not normally found in classical dance, where dramatic characterization is typically subordinated to the sweep and flow of unselfconscious, directly presented movement. But pure dance classicism had gone to seed by the mid-40's, and was sorely in need of renewal. George Balanchine, as it happens, was then engaged in just such an undertaking, but Robbins had yet to dance in any of his neoclassical ballets; his own imaginative world was still circumscribed by the *angst*-ridden dance drama of Tudor and the decadent "classicism" of the Russian émigrés who dominated Ballet Theater. Robbins's straightforward theatricality thus came as a breath of fresh air, and few were inclined at the time to reflect on its possible limitations.

During the next decade and a half, Robbins made a dozen more ballets, ranging from the high-strung *Age of Anxiety* (1950, music by Bernstein), described by the choreographer as "a ritual in which four people exercise their illusions in their search for security . . . an attempt to see what life is about," to *The Concert* (1956, music by Chopin), a brilliantly effective set of comic sketches which illustrate the idle fantasies going through the minds of various people attending a piano recital. While some of these dances had more or less explicit libretti—most notoriously *The Cage* (1951, music by Stravinsky), which tells the story of a tribe of insect-like women who kill the men with whom they mate—others dispensed altogether with plot, a tendency seen as early as Robbins's second ballet, *Interplay* (1945, music by Morton Gould), and further encouraged by his first encounter and subsequent close association with Balanchine, the reigning master of "abstract" ballet.

IN 1948, Robbins saw a New York City Ballet performance of Balanchine's *Symphony in C* (music by Bizet), then as now one of the company's signature pieces. He wrote to the older choreographer, and Balanchine, already an admirer, immediately hired him as a dancer and choreographer, appointing him associate artistic director the following year.

By his own account, Robbins was deeply impressed by Balanchine's ability to fill his plotless ballets with "the most extraordinary encounters and events"—so deeply impressed, indeed, that in testifying before HUAC in 1953, he claimed to have broken with the Communist party in part because its repudiation of "bourgeois formalism" in art was incompatible with Balanchine's neoclassical style! Yet Robbins also remained uncomfortable with pure classicism, and it is significant that not long before he joined NYCB he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had attended the Actors Studio, then run by the director Elia Kazan. There he had studied "the Method," whereby actors (his fellow students included Marlon Brando and Montgomery Clift) were taught to analyze in psychological and sociological terms the characters they portrayed. From then on, Robbins would use Method-derived techniques in working with dancers.

It is thus no coincidence that Robbins's ballets, even the plotless ones, typically emphasize situation over movement. A characteristic example from the 50's is *Afternoon of a Faun*, a pas de deux set in a dance studio with a boy and girl staring mutely into the studio mirror as they dance together, preoccupied more with the beauty of their individual bodies than with the possibility of mutual attraction. In describing *Faun*, Robbins himself has invoked imagery more typical of a theatrical director than of a choreographer: "I always thought the girl had just washed her hair and just had on new toe shoes and a new clean practice dress and came into the studio to preen and practice."

Interestingly, *Afternoon of a Faun* makes no reference to popular dance steps, and is recognizably "American" only in the lightness of its touch. It is as if Robbins, having first made his mark with a frankly popular dance like *Fancy Free*, now felt the need to establish his legitimacy with a classical work set to the music of a European composer. This foreshadowed his mature style, in which the techniques and preoccupations seen in the ten-minute-long *Faun* were to be writ increasingly large.

BY 1954, however, Robbins's commitment to ballet had also temporarily lessened. For the next decade, picking up from his success ten years earlier with *On the Town*, he devoted most of his creative energies to Broadway.

Not that *On the Town* was the only musical in which he had been involved; other early successes included *The King and I* (1951). But starting in 1954 with *Peter Pan*, his adaptation of James Barrie's play, Robbins radically enlarged his responsibility for the shows with which he was associated. His credit now read, "Entire Production Directed and Choreographed by Jerome Robbins." And this was not just a matter of billing, but a statement of principle. More than anyone else active on Broadway in the 50's and 60's, Robbins sought to create something not unlike the Wagnerian ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a totally unified theatrical experience. According to Sheldon Harnick, the lyricist for *Fiddler on the Roof*:

> When Robbins takes over a show, it's his vision in every department. He drives the set designer crazy, he drives the orchestrator crazy, he has a total vision of what he wants. He presses you and presses you on every point, no matter how trivial, until it isn't trivial any more.

Robbins was no less driven in his dealings with performers, and some of the tales of his backstage behavior during his years on Broadway are appalling. Yet the results of his bullying were memorable, especially in the three musicals for which he is best known: *West Side Story*, in which Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was recast as a clash between New York street gangs; *Gypsy* (1959), the story of the stripper Gypsy Rose Lee; and *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), the musical-comedy adaptation of Sholem Aleichem's tales of ghetto life in czarist Russia. In these shows, the theatricality which in his ballets of the 50's often seemed at odds with an uncertainly grasped classicism found its perfect expression. Even the tough-minded Arlene Croce has called *Gypsy* "a masterpiece of poetic theater and radical design."

Why, then, did Robbins abandon the musical-comedy stage after *Fiddler*? Having previously had the opportunity to make ballets precisely to his satisfaction, he may have found it galling to have to deal with commercial-minded Broadway producers. More importantly, though, the ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was by definition evanescent. None of Robbins's Broadway shows has ever been revived successfully in anything approaching its original form. Even where the dances survive, as in *West Side Story*, their surrounding theatrical context has been lost.* Only in ballet would it be possible for him to create unified theatrical works which could have a lasting life in repertory.

IN 1969, after a thirteen-year absence, Robbins returned to New York City Ballet with *Dances at a Gathering*, a work for ten dancers set to eighteen piano pieces by Chopin. This work—the definitive realization of the artistic vision toward which he had been striving since he joined NYCB twenty years earlier—marked the beginning of his major phase as a ballet choreographer.

In this ballet, a group of young men and women meets under a blue sky and dances in ever-changing combinations for an hour. Some of the variations are lyrical, others comic. At one point, five dancers strike snapshot-like poses to the music of Chopin's C-major Mazurka, op. 7, no. 5; in another dance—set to the F-minor Waltz, op. 70, no. 2—a girl flutters flirtatiously around three boys who successively ignore her, after which she shrugs

* The only commercially available record of a Robbins-directed musical as originally produced is the videocassette of the 1960 NBC telecast of *Peter Pan* (GoodTimes Home Video 7001), starring Mary Martin and Cyril Ritchard, which gives a clear impression of what the show looked like in the theater. In addition, Robbins meticulously restaged his dances for *The King and I* for the 1956 film version. The films of *West Side Story* and *Fiddler on the Roof*, alas, are unevenly cast, grossly exaggerated caricatures of the original stage productions. (Robbins's choreography was not used in the films of *On the Town* and *Gypsy*.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and runs offstage. Though the work is long, the scale of the individual variations is intimate and there are no full-ensemble dances. At the end, the dancers gather together—the only time they all appear at once—and gaze at a threatening cloud as it crosses the horizon. They then bow to one another and pair off, and the curtain falls.

"There are no stories to any of the dances in *Dances at a Gathering*," Robbins has said. "There are no plots and no roles. The dancers are themselves dancing with each other to that music in that space." But *Dances*, while plotless, is not neoclassical: the dancers are strongly characterized, both individually and collectively (it is clear from the staging that they "know" each other), and the work as a whole embodies an overarching dramatic situation. Robbins described that situation to Edward Villella, a member of the original cast:

> When you walk out on-stage, you're actually beginning the ballet. You look around. It's as if it's the last time you'll ever dance in this theater, in this space. And this is your home, the place you know.

Dances at a Gathering, then, is a dance about dancers—an approach first employed by Robbins in *Afternoon of a Faun* and recurrent in most of his later ballets.

Unsympathetic critics have applied the word "cute" to *Dances at a Gathering*, not only because it avoids direct classical statement but because Robbins makes effective use of certain obvious theatrical tricks. (Many of the variations, for example, end with an eye-catching lift as the dancers make their exit.) Others have been troubled by the ballet's length—at 63 minutes, it is twice as long as most one-act ballets—and by the final, solemn tableau, which in a bad performance can seem embarrassingly heavy-handed.

Yet the actual dance content is for the most part very beautiful, and Robbins's knack for characterization is, as always, uncanny. As the great dance critic Edwin Denby has perceptively written:

> Robbins's genius in focusing on a decisive momentary movement—almost like a zoom lens—makes vivid the special quality of each dance. . . . You see each dancer dance marvelously and you also see each one as a fascinating individual—complex, alone, and with any of the others, individually most sensitive and generous in their relationships.

The result is a ballet which occupies an uneasy middle ground between neoclassicism and dance drama. Its virtues, as well as its problems, would be reflected in all of Robbins's subsequent work.

BETWEEN 1970 and 1990, when he retired from the company, Robbins produced ballets regularly for New York City Ballet. The most ambitious of these, *The Goldberg Variations*, uses a large cast to imaginative but uneven effect. More consistently successful are those which seek to please rather than impress, including *In the Night* (1970, music by Chopin), *Ma Mère l'Oye* (1975, music by Ravel), *Piano Pieces* (1981, music by Tchaikowsky), and *I'm Old Fashioned* (1983, music by Morton Gould). While these works differ greatly in tone, they have two things in common: none is a pure-dance ensemble piece in the manner of Balanchine, and all are in some sense "about" dancers (or a particular style of dance). *Ma Mère l'Oye*, for example, makes ingenious use of costumes and set pieces borrowed from other dances in the NYCB repertory, and *I'm Old Fashioned* is a tribute to Fred Astaire (a clip from one of Astaire's films is shown at the beginning and end).

Throughout the second half of the 80's, Robbins's choreographic output dwindled, and most of his new dances were obviously minor efforts or *pièces d'occasion*. The chief exception was *Ives, Songs* (1988, music by Charles Ives), a reminiscence of childhood and adolescence set in World War I, around the time of Robbins's birth; its valedictory overtones, while affecting, are uncomfortably blatant. He returned to Broadway the following year with *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*, a virtuoso retrospective consisting of scenes and dances from ten of his musical-comedy productions. The juxtaposition of these two events suggested to many that Robbins's long career had at last neared its end, and it came as no surprise when in 1990 he announced his retirement from NYCB.

No new ballets came until 1994, when Mikhail Baryshnikov premiered *A Suite of Dances*, a solo work set to excerpts from Bach's unaccompanied cello suites. Later that same year, students of the School of American Ballet (founded by Balanchine and closely associated with NYCB) did *2 + 3 Part Inventions*, a piano-accompanied dance also set to the music of Bach. Rumors began to circulate that these works were studies for a major ballet, and the rumors proved true this past January when NYCB premiered *Brandenburg*, a dance for two solo couples and a corps of sixteen set to Bach's Third Brandenburg Concerto and individual movements from three of the other Brandenburgs.

At first glance, *Brandenburg* appears to be the missing link in Robbins's output. A large-scale ensemble piece structured along classical lines, it contains no implied relationships, and the dancers are not individually characterized. But a closer look reveals that it is also merely the latest in Robbins's long series of dances about dancers—specifically, a corps of Robbins-style dancers performing a "neoclassical" ballet which incorporates all the choreographer's signature moves (down to the cartwheels first seen in *Fancy Free*). No more a direct dance statement than *Dances at a Gather-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing, *Brandenburg* is a theatricalized portrayal of neoclassicism, and one which, for all the fetching grace and fluidity of its complex ensembles, is to George Balanchine's *Symphony in C* as *West Side Story* is to *Romeo and Juliet*.

THAT ROBBINS should suffer by comparison with his mentor, Balanchine, is no shame: what choreographer would not? But comparisons between the two men, while inevitable, nevertheless obscure the fact that their sensibilities are vastly different. Balanchine was the ideal type of what the playwright Friedrich Schiller called the "naive" poet—the wholly natural genius unburdened by romantic self-consciousness. Robbins, by contrast, is a no less ideal example of Schiller's "sentimental" poet, beset by ideas, intensely aware of his alienation from the natural world, forever seeking redemption through his art.

The irony is that Robbins has long admired and aspired to Balanchine's "naiveté." Everything he has said about his art makes that clear, from his statement that the dancers in *Dances at a Gathering* "are themselves dancing with each other to that music in that space" to the revealing remark he made to the dance critic Deborah Jowitt in 1974:

> Essentially what I care about is working; that's what I feel my job is. I don't want to fall into profundities and artistry and surround everything with whipped cream. I work, only instead of being a plumber, I'm a choreographer. I like my job.

Not surprisingly, then, Robbins's most successful ballets are those in which he operates as a craftsman, shunning what Arlene Croce has called "the pursuit of cosmic bellyaches." Profundity is his weakest suit, *angst* a close second. It is in striving for "naiveté" that Robbins loosens the bonds of his sentimentality and most closely approaches the direct expressiveness of pure neoclassicism; his failure to free himself altogether from those bonds has prevented him from becoming an artist of the first rank.

But how many artists of the first rank have there been in 20th-century dance? The list proves unexpectedly short: Balanchine, Paul Taylor, and possibly Merce Cunningham and Frederick Ashton. And judged by any standard other than the most exalted, Jerome Robbins ranks very high indeed. Not only is he the sole American-born ballet choreographer to have created an *oeuvre* of demonstrably long-lasting interest, but his fusion of classical and vernacular movement set the tone for American dance—modern as well as ballet—from the 70's on.

In this respect as in others, it is finally more appropriate to compare Robbins not to Balanchine but to his old friend and collaborator, Leonard Bernstein, with whom his name will always be linked. For the positions of the two men in the hierarchies of their respective domains have proved over the years to be strikingly similar: though never attaining the indisputable greatness after which they so passionately sought, both gave pleasure their whole lives long, left behind distinguished and memorable works of theater, and have earned permanent places of honor in the annals of American art.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books in Review

Errata

The Dictionary of Global Culture
edited by
Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Knopf. 717 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Samuel McCracken

OUR CULTURE, Western culture, is one of the few that have ever reached out to know the best of others. Marco Polo went to Beijing; Kublai Khan did not come to Venice. The eponymous hero of John P. Marquand's novel, *The Late George Apley*, collected Han bronzes; his opposite numbers in Shanghai did not collect scrimshaw. *They* would have agreed with the Chinese emperor who rejected a trade pact with Britain, saying, "We have all we need." What we miscall Western culture is in fact the most diverse culture in the world, drawing from societies as different as Homeric Greece, contemporary America, and Anglo-Saxon England.

Now comes *The Dictionary of Global Culture*, with a first printing of 50,000 copies. The editors, both of whom teach Afro-American studies at Harvard, apparently see Western culture differently—as a monolithic, self-referential construction which is only now beginning to realize that other peoples have culture, too. They intend to further our education by putting "some of the achievements of Western culture alongside those of many other cultures and traditions."

The *Dictionary* thus parades as something new under the sun, a departure from traditional, "Eurocentric" reference works. To test this hypothesis, I went browsing in that quintessential monument of Western culture, the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1910-11). My survey, limited to material from outside North America and Europe that would have been current by the turn of the century, yielded an altogether predictable result: almost all of the discoveries revealed in the *Dictionary* are already in the *Britannica*.

So what we have before us is, at best, a concise redaction of existing reference works. How well is it done?

Toward third-world culture, the general approach seems scholarly in intent and execution, but the selection procedures are frequently tendentious, or weird. Thus, although African leaders like Julius Nyerere and Kenneth Kaunda are present, and are even treated with some severity for their anti-democratic policies, other and worse leaders—notably Idi Amin and Jean-Bedel Bokassa—are inexplicably absent. The effect is not only to suppress information about black dictators as vicious and corrupt as any white ones, but to deprive the reader of material illustrative of ethnic tensions and cultural conflict in present-day Africa. But these flaws are minor compared with the book's treatment of Western culture.

First, the coverage is, to use no stronger term, selective. Among those absent, as a ten minutes' ramble through the *Dictionary* finds, are the following: Racine, Boccaccio, Dumas *père* and *fils*, Walter Scott, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Dryden, Spenser, Thacker-

SAMUEL MCCRACKEN *is assistant to the chancellor of Boston University.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ay, Horace, Cicero, Catullus, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Purcell, Reynolds, Tiepolo, Piranesi, Watteau, Winslow Homer, Kepler, Thomas Hardy, Lewis Carroll, Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, H. L. Mencken, Sinclair Lewis, and oh, yes, both Mark Twain and Samuel L. Clemens.

Next, such dead white males who have made it in are treated with pervasive incompetence: the historical howlers in *The Dictionary of Global Culture* would fill a small volume in themselves. We are told, for example, that Abraham Lincoln "received his law degree in 1836," though Lincoln probably never even saw the outside of a law school, much less the inside of one, having instead been licensed to practice on the basis of self-study. In an article on the French Revolution we learn that Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette went to the guillotine on January 21, 1793—true for the king but not for his queen, who mounted the scaffold on October 16, after (and this is not trivial) months of political and judicial deterioration in France. Magna Carta, we are laughably informed, is known as the Great Charter "because of its massive size," and had its origin in "a document drafted by English landlords"—no doubt in search of rents due. Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* is misnamed *The Legend of the Good Woman* (from Sichuan?), and his *Troilus and Criseyde*, improved to *The Loves of Troilus and Criseyde* (perhaps in anticipation of the Harlequin edition), is said to be "considered one of the great love poems of the English language," a characterization that would not survive the quickest skimming of this complex novel in verse. Incidentally, the author of this last bit of rigamarole supplies a precise date for each of Chaucer's works, as if they had been published in the modern fashion (the earliest manuscripts, none of which is precisely datable, postdate Chaucer's death), and for good measure we are told first that Chaucer began writing *The Canterbury Tales* about 1387 and then, three lines down, that the work is dated "c. 1478."

BUT THE myriad errors that disfigure *The Dictionary of Global Culture* reflect something more serious than sloppy editing; they reflect a truly alarming incomprehension. It is as if a small corps of uneducated undergraduates had been set to work reading other reference books and had then rendered in amateurish prose their imperfect grasp of the information gleaned thereby. But neither carelessness nor incomprehension exhausts the matter. Although there is no entry for "political correctness," the phenomenon is richly illustrated here. Occasionally this is good for a chuckle—as when Sophocles is said to have been "born . . . to a wealthy arms manufacturer." More often, it is simply tiresome.

Thus, the Dictionary bravely rescues Rudyard Kipling from the charge of having been "the bard of the British empire," but it does so only to recruit him for a better cause:

> Although frequently dismissed as a vulgar imperialist, Kipling's work has recently received attention for its innovative use of popular forms, its exposure of the grim realities of working-class life, and its critique of Britain's ruling classes.

Evidently, in this view of culture, poetry is to be read only for its politics, while poetic form is worth considering only as it relates to class: Kipling gets a pat on the head for his proletarian prosody. (There is also the inevitable mistake: according to the *Dictionary*, "Kipling urged U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt in 1899 'to take up the white man's burden,'" but T.R. did not become President until September 1901.)

MOST OF the faults of this work can be seen in the entry on the 17th-century Metaphysical poet John Donne.

Errors of fact: although both of Donne's parents were Catholics, we are confidently informed that he was raised in his *mother's* Catholic faith. The surname of Donne's patron, Sir Thomas Egerton, is misspelled "Edgerton," and he is referred to ignorantly as "Sir Edgerton." Though Donne was an Anglican by the time he was thirty, here he is not permitted to renounce his Catholicism until the age of forty-three, when he "took his vows with the Church of England, making possible a career as a member of the clergy"; in fact, ordination as a priest was something Donne put off for many years after his rejection of Catholicism.

Political correctness: victimhood is celebrated by an enumeration of the oppressions suffered by Donne and his family on account of their Catholicism. On the plus side, Donne's early poems are said to exhibit a "coarseness slightly subversive of Elizabethan convention." "Subversive," in the vocabulary of the global culture, is always a Good Thing.

Otherwise, the entry on Donne is a desert. There is no mention whatsoever of his importance as a preacher and prose stylist, and the only information given on him as a poet is that (in addition to his "slightly subversive" coarseness) he was "mildly bawdy." Of his remarkable originality and extraordinary, wrenching, power of language, nothing. Of his pervasive influence on the poets of his own time, nothing. One of the greatest poets of Western and, yes, global culture is thus reduced to a dead white male, raised up from the ruck only because he was (early on) a victim, and perhaps because of that mildly subversive bawdiness.

In the light of all this, it may seem petty to complain that the *Dictionary* has next to no cross-references; or that Chinese transliteration wobbles mystifyingly between *pinyin* and Wade-Giles; or that the entries are unnecessarily and almost universally verbose; or that the editors seem to have no consistent view of their audience. Sometimes, indeed, they appear to assume their readers are from Mars, as when a tangential reference to Shakespeare glosses him as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an English playwright, or Freud is explained as an Austrian psychologist. But at other times they write for adepts, as in the article on "punk," dense with pedantry ("American art bands, like Cleveland's Pere Ubu, took their dissonant cues from jack-of-all-trades Captain Beefheart," etc.). Occasionally they seem not merely ignorant but deficient in short-term memory: an entry pegs Beethoven as a German in one paragraph, an Austrian in the next.

What can explain this incredibly shoddy performance, emanating from two distinguished professors at a distinguished university and midwifed by a once-fastidious publisher? "None of the entries is signed," the editors remind us. "Even when an outside editor penned the piece, we have felt free to edit and to alter it."

This is tantamount to saying that *The Dictionary of Global Culture* has subordinated accuracy to other goals. It would have been interesting had the editors seen fit to disclose them. The ones that come to mind are political correctness, making a buck, and not working all that hard.

Out of Arabia

The Middle East:
A Brief History of
the Last 2,000 Years
by Bernard Lewis
Scribner. 433 pp. $30.00

Reviewed by
Robert B. Satloff

THIS "BRIEF history of the last 2,000 years," by the 20th century's preeminent historian of the Islamic world, is written with its author's customary wit and gravity, sympathy and objectivity, breadth and precision. As in all his many works, Bernard Lewis is here neither an old-fashioned chronicler nor a with-it historical revisionist but rather a master distiller, one who combines a phenomenal range of knowledge with a humane temperament and a powerfully synthesizing mind.

In 400 pages, drawing upon a full palette of primary material from every imaginable source, *The Middle East* traces the political, economic, religious, social, cultural, and technological currents that flowed across a broad swath of territory from Morocco to the Central Asian steppes. Today's Middle East, in Lewis's telling, emerged from a great clash between two ancient civilizations—Persia and Byzantium. Centuries of struggle left both of these vulnerable to a third force—Islam—which burst onto the scene in the 7th century C.E. from a remote corner of Arabia. For the next 1,000 years, Islam steadily grew, swallowing up Persia, enfeebling Byzantium, becoming the basis of a powerful civilization itself, and then, exhausted and under pressure from the West, contracting over the next 400 years.

In evaluating Islam's spectacular rise, Lewis underscores the simplicity and effectiveness of the five "positive obligations" by which adherents of the faith were and are bound. Among them is *jihad*. This word translates literally as "striving," as in the Quran's "striving in the path of God." But as Lewis shows, in Islam's holy texts it is interpreted primarily in martial terms—with profound historical consequences:

> Between the Muslim state and its infidel neighbors there was a perpetual and obligatory state of war which would only end with the inevitable triumph of the true faith over unbelief and the entry of the whole world into the house of Islam.

ROBERT B. SATLOFF, *a new contributor, is the executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the author of* From Abdullah to Hussein: Jordan in Transition *(Oxford, 1994).*

Sixty Years of Great Fiction from Partisan Review

"Have there been ten quarterlies in the literary history of the West that have meant as much to the readers of their time as Partisan Review? *I would guess not."* —Norman Mailer

THIS ANTHOLOGY showcases the work of many of the great writers of this century and shows the significant role *Partisan Review* has played in the development of our literary culture.

Individual and examination copies available from Partisan Review Press, 236 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215. Tel. 617/353-4260.

Walter Abish	James T. Farrell	Alberto Moravia	Susan Sontag
James Baldwin	William Faulkner	Amos Oz	Jean Stafford
Samuel Beckett	Franz Kafka	Cynthia Ozick	Gertrude Stein
Saul Bellow	Doris Lessing	Katherine Anne Porter	William Styron
Italo Calvino	Bernard Malamud	Isaac Rosenfeld	Tatyana Tolstaya
Albert Camus	André Malraux	Philip Roth	Michel Tournier
Eleanor Clark	Norman Manea	Delmore Schwartz	Lionel Trilling
John Dos Passos	Mary McCarthy	Ignazio Silone	Robert Penn Warren
Ralph Ellison	Daphne Merkin	Isaac Bashevis Singer	

Paper: $14.95 0-9644377-4-0. Cloth: $24.95 0-9644377-5-9
Distributed by Independent Publishers Group. 1-800-888-4741

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

While this suggests a creed that was uniform over time and place, Lewis emphasizes that Islam was and remains anything but static. Rather, he notes, it is a living faith that, at least in the pre-modern period, found a way to accommodate the customs and contributions of peoples it conquered or was conquered by. Although *jihad* was essential to Islam's territorial expansion, the ability to assimilate and absorb was no less important in the religion's remarkable success, with Jewish and Christian minorities playing a special role as conveyors of innovation. When the ability to absorb declined, so, as a direct consequence, did Islamic civilization itself.

Lewis thus traces the downfall of the Muslim world's power and prestige to the accession of conservative dynasts who attempted to seal the faith off from change—spurning even such technological achievements of the Europeans as the printing press, and thereby causing the cultural-political-military balance of power to tilt away from Islam. In the end, a civilization committed to "an obligatory state of war" was forced to rely for its political survival on the sufferance of an imperial Europe committed to a very different ethos. And this dependence, as Lewis shows, created in turn a seething and still unappeased resentment of the West.

RESENTMENT OF a superior West is one of the reasons Lewis is hardly cheerful about the future of the Middle East. Though he strikes a note of cautious optimism with regard to the half-century of Arab-Israeli conflict, he also reminds us that that conflict is just one of many in the wider Middle East, a place that today is "more dangerous" than ever before.

One thing that has added to the danger and created a climate of uncertainty is the changing internal role played by national armies. Whereas in some countries (e.g., Turkey) the military has bolstered the forces of democracy, elsewhere (as in Sudan) military elites have been encouraging the most aggressive sort of religious fundamentalism. Another element is that whereas Islam was once laid low by its refusal to accept modern technology, today modern technology, including arms and communications equipment, is widely dispersed. "The pettiest of modern dictators has greater control," Lewis writes, "than even the mightiest of Arab caliphs, Persian shahs, and Turkish sultans."

In the end, Lewis concludes, a question mark hangs over the Middle East. The Soviet collapse has led to the emergence of an entire constellation of new states in the Caucasus and Central Asia, some wedged between Turkey and Iran, with regional consequences that cannot be foreseen. (One key subtheme of Lewis's historical account is the longstanding triangular struggle for paramountcy within the Middle East among Turkey, Persia, and the Arabs.) At the same time, however, the end of the cold war has diminished the entire area's strategic importance. Though outside powers will undoubtedly continue to intervene whenever their energy supplies are put at risk, they will not, as in the heyday of European imperialism, attempt to impose their will and their way of life. The Islamic countries of the region may thus, for the first time in centuries, be left to solve their internal problems on their own.

And how will they solve them? Will they, Lewis asks, "unite for peace," "unite for *jihad*," or "go the way of Yugoslavia and Somalia" and disintegrate? Historians are not called upon to be prophets, but this magisterial tour of 2,000 years, nothing if not realistic, suggests a parlous future for a region cursed with more than its share of authoritarian regimes.

DURING DIFFERENT phases of his long professional life—he is now over eighty—Bernard Lewis has been subjected to criticism of one stripe or another. Most egregiously of all, he has been accused, by Edward Said and others, of "Orientalism," which they define as a professional condescension toward Muslims but by which they really appear to mean a failure to advocate their various causes, whether Islamic revivalism or Palestinian nationalism. In *The Middle East*, as in the immensely rich chain of essays and books on every facet of Islamic history that has preceded and led up to it, Lewis demonstrates once again that he does indeed fail the test of ideological advocacy—but also that the cause of frank and dispassionate scholarship, as well as of vivid historical writing, has had in our day no steadier or more exemplary champion.

State of Siege

Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline
by Robert H. Bork
Regan Books. 382 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Joseph Adelson

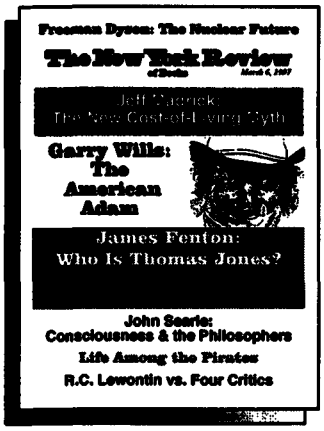
THIS BOOK, which became a (perhaps) unexpected best-seller, is a *catalogue raisonnée* of the legacy of the 1960's, and in particular of that decade's sudden explosion of hatred toward this country on the part of some of its most privileged citizens, the children of the liberal middle class. To read Judge Bork's succinct account in the opening pages of the events he witnessed on the campus of Yale University, where he then taught in the law school, is to recall the surprise and confusion some of us felt when we first beheld that strange spectacle: indulged and self-indulgent college

JOSEPH ADELSON *is professor of psychology at the University of Michigan and the author of* Inventing Adolescence.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Subscribe to "the leading intellectual forum in the US"

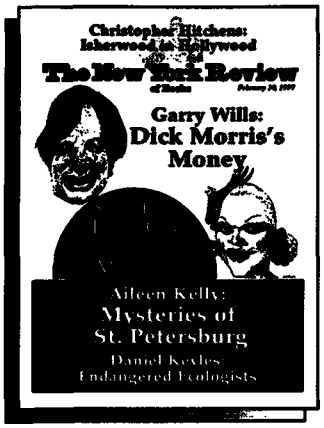
—*New York* magazine


Freeman Dyson: The Nuclear Future
The New York Review
Garry Wills: The American Adam
James Fenton: Who Is Thomas Jones?
John Searle: Consciousness & the Philosophers
Life Among the Pirates
R.C. Lewontin vs. Four Critics

Since we began publishing in 1963, *The New York Review of Books* has provided remarkable variety and intellectual excitement. Twenty times a year, the world's best writers and scholars address themselves to 130,000 discerning readers worldwide...people who know that the widest range of subjects—literature, art, politics, science, history, music, education—will be discussed with wit, clarity, and brilliance.

In each issue subscribers of *The New York Review* enjoy articles by such celebrated writers as John Updike, Elizabeth Hardwick, Gore Vidal, Nadine Gordimer, Oliver Sacks, and countless others, as well as the literary bare-knuckle boxing of the Letters to the Editors section.

If you think you too might enjoy the penetrating insights and arguments found in each issue of *The New York Review*, subscribe now with this special introductory offer. You'll not only save over 60% ($42.50) from the newsstand price, but you'll also get a free copy of *Selections*. With this offer you'll receive:


Christopher Hitchens: Isherwood in Hollywood
The New York Review
Garry Wills: Dick Morris's Money
Aileen Kelly: Mysteries of St. Petersburg
Daniel Kevles: Endangered Ecologists

➤ **20 Issues** A full year's subscription of 20 issues for just $27.50—a saving of 50% off the regular subscription rate of $55.00 and a saving of $42.50 (60%) off the newsstand price.

➤ **A Free Book:** *Selections* is a collection of 19 reviews and essays published verbatim from our first two issues. In it you'll discover how certain works such as *Naked Lunch* or *The Fire Next Time*, now regarded as modern classics, were initially perceived by critics when they were first published and reviewed.

➤ **A Risk-Free Guarantee** If you are unhappy with your subscription at any time, you may cancel. We will refund the unused portion of the subscription cost. What's more, *Selections* is yours to keep as our gift to you for trying *The New York Review*.

The New York Review of Books

Return to: Subscriber Service Dept., PO Box 420382, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0382

❑ **Yes!** Please enter my one-year subscription (20 issues) to *The New York Review* at the special introductory rate of only $27.50 (a saving of 60% off the newsstand rate). With my paid subscription, I will also receive *Selections* at no extra charge and a no-risk guarantee.

❑ $27.50 enclosed* Charge my: ❑ Am Ex ❑ MasterCard ❑ Visa ❑ Bill me. (US only)

Name _____

Address _____

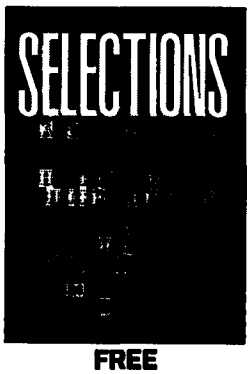
_____

City/State/Zip _____

A7DC4G

Credit Card Number _____

Credit Card Expiration Date/Signature _____



FREE with this offer

☎ For faster service on credit card orders, fax to: (212) 586-8003. Please include your own phone and fax in case of questions.
If you fax this order, please do not also mail it.

*Make checks or US money orders payable to *The New York Review of Books*. We accept US Dollars drawn on a US bank or Canadian Dollars drawn on a Canadian bank. If paying by CDN$ return to Mike Johnson, *The New York Review of Books*, 250 West 57 St., Rm 1321, New York, NY 10107. We cannot accept international money orders. Rates outside the US: to Canada $53/$72.50CDN, Rest of World Regular Post $57, Rest of World Print Flow Air Post (recommended for Africa, Australia, the Far East, New Zealand, and South America) $84. Credit card orders will be charged at the US Dollar rates shown. Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

students portraying themselves, in all apparent sincerity, as victims of the cruelest tyranny, while their elders, professors and deans, unable to oppose or even answer them, suffered their accusations meekly or added their own voices to the chorus of condemnation.

My own most vivid memory from that time is of sitting in the University of Michigan's Hill Auditorium, a concert hall usually given over to such musical giants as Vladimir Horowitz, now given over to violent leftist oratory. In the chair next to me was a girl dressed in the characteristically disheveled co-ed costume of the time who every few minutes would leap from her seat to scream vile obscenities at the top of her lungs, then sit down to gossip amiably with the friend beside her about the dating scene in their dorm.

No wonder some of us thought these passions were too shallow to survive the moment, and would soon be spent. But of course we could not have been more wrong. As Bork writes, what took place then was self-sustaining—not merely a spasm of disgust at the escalating war in Vietnam but a "revolt against the entire American culture." This revolt soon turned into a steady state of siege, either directly or implicitly coming to dominate most reasoned discourse on American life.

CHAPTER BY chapter, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah* methodically takes us through the sectors of our experience which have been infected by the excesses of post-1960's liberalism: from popular culture to crime, illegitimacy, the welfare system, abortion, euthanasia, sexuality and sexual roles, race, intelligence, religion, and morality. On each of these topics Bork brings to bear an astonishing range of information and argument.

Take crime and, especially, illegitimacy. Bork points to the tripling in the rate of violent crime in the two decades from 1960 to 1980 and, in the same period, the rise in illegitimacy from 5 to 18 and now 30 percent. How shall we understand this? Acknowledging the economic and sociological factors at work, in particular the baby boom and its consequences, he also highlights influences which are, or used to be, played down in the standard accounts of the subject: for example, the role of a mass entertainment industry emphasizing "unbridled emotion and sexuality." Although the glamorizing of sexual freedom has affected all strata of the young, the most significant damage has been done to children raised by unwed adolescents, large numbers of whom are of underclass origins. From early on, these children are handicapped psychologically, showing deficits in thinking and learning which are soon reflected in poor school performance and high dropout rates, which in turn lead to even higher rates of illegitimacy and crime.

All this is now quite familiar, and widely lamented; but it was not too many years ago that any effort to call attention to these problems, or to warn about their consequences, was greeted with utter disdain and condemned as snobbish, or racist, or as masking an effort to return to the sexual constrictions of the Victorian era. A similar disdain greeted those who sought to point to the consequences of our unfettered attitude toward abortion, a subject Bork treats in a chapter titled "Killing for Convenience" and links to the movements for assisted suicide and euthanasia.

Bork does not mince words. Thanks to the chain of federal and Supreme Court cases following *Roe* v. *Wade*, the 1973 decision on abortion, we are now, he writes, well on our way to accepting the killing without consent of many of our elderly ill and infirm. These decisions, he asserts, are "equal in their audacity and abuse of judicial office to *Dred Scott*," the 1856-57 decision legitimizing slavery; in their disregard for human life at either end of the biological spectrum, they both reflect and serve to confirm "the nihilism that is spreading in our culture."

At his most furious in his discussion of abortion and euthanasia, Bork is at his most caustic in his discussion of radical feminism, which he considers the single most destructive movement to emerge from the 60's. Not only have radical feminists raised the temperature of our rhetoric to grotesque proportions—as in the statement by one of them that the American social system, *a/k/a* the "patriarchy," has been organized specifically to "control, degrade, torture, kill, and rape our bodies"—but the movement's wild distortions have come to be accepted by more and more people as simple matters of fact. Thus, such fantasies as that widespread wife-beating takes place in America on Super Bowl Sunday, or that there are 150,000 deaths annually from the patriarchy-induced condition of *anorexia nervosa*, find their way into college textbooks and curricula, there to be established as incontrovertible truths. So successful has the movement been in intimidating male opposition—to contradict its misstatements is, after all, implicitly to support the degradation of women—that Bork believes it will take nothing less than another women's movement to undo the damage.

It is a paradox of our time that radical feminism, with its touchiness about "oppression," arose just when freedom and opportunity for women became available on an unprecedented scale. As Bork observes, a similar pattern can be found in the area of race, where again we find dramatic progress accompanied by a quantum increase in black racial suspicion, in some instances delusional (as in the contention that AIDS was invented to infect and exterminate blacks, or that the CIA is behind the drug trade in minority communities) and extraordinary degrees of resentment and hostility toward whites, even, or perhaps especially, among black intellectuals. It was once believed these hatreds were residual and would diminish in time, but so far there have been few signs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of that; in the meantime, as white liberals bow their heads in guilt, a counter-resentment takes hold among other whites, and grows.

One approaches this book's final chapter wondering whether Bork will seek or find some plausible ground for hope. Yes and no; he does, yet he does not. Given the persistence and single-mindedness of the liberal intellectual culture, which seems quite content with the demoralization it has achieved, the prospects for salvation seem dim. We ought not expect our cultural elites to draw back in regret—least of all the courts, which Bork lambastes as "an agent of power without legitimacy either in democratic theory or in the Constitution." But will their triumph survive?

Here Bork seems to equivocate. He glimpses the possibilities held out by our current religious revival, but one senses that this is merely a gesture on his part, born of a wish to avoid the appearance of wholly unredeemable pessimism. That pessimism is the true message of this work, and no political successes by the Right, not even the commercial success of a book like *Slouching Towards Gomorrah* itself, should suffice to convince us he is altogether wrong.

Along the Continuum

A Tour of the Calculus
by David Berlinski
Pantheon. 331 pp. $27.50

Reviewed by
David Guaspari

Calculus is a remarkable intellectual achievement—and a deeply consequential one, for it has made modern science, and especially modern physics, possible. Its essentials have been refined, over three centuries, into a structure of elegant economy. David Berlinski's *Tour* walks the general reader through this modern edifice, displaying the logical frame that supports it and the grandeur of the completed whole.

The excursion begins with the "fantastic" idea that "the world may be understood in terms of real numbers"; Berlinski uses "fantastic" precisely here, to mean a product of visionary imagination. The real numbers are those that measure continuous quantities such as time and space; they include not only the counting numbers and their ratios (fractions) but the so-called irrational numbers like pi. And the "terms" are those laid down by Galilean science.

The modern empirical mode of inquiry established by Galileo asked not *why* but *how*. It sought not the reason a body falls, but rules relating the distance and the duration of its descent. This project triumphed spectacularly with Newton's *Principia* (1687). Newton is Berlinski's presiding deity, for to construct his System of the World, Newton had first to devise a proper mathematical basis for Galilean science: namely, the model of motion-and-change we call calculus.

This new world of mathematics, discovered independently by Leibniz (1646-1714), took two centuries of wanderings to map; the heart of Berlinski's project is a rationalized account of the cartographic journeys, visiting landmarks found in any modern text—such as analytic geometry and real numbers, functions, limits, continuity—and impelled forward by fundamental questions: can we describe the world's scenery in quantitative terms at all? And how, in those terms, can we understand its processes of change?

The first of these questions leads to analytic geometry and to deep problems concerning the notion of number itself. Analytic geometry marries geometry to algebra. It permits us to represent space, or anything we can picture geometrically, within a powerful engine of calculation. But the real numbers with which algebra calculates become a problem as soon as we stop taking them for granted. We can measure any whole or fractional number of inches by counting. Astonishingly, however, such measurements do not exhaust the whole continuum of lengths. They do not, for example, allow us to measure the diagonal of a one-inch square. We can postulate a number, the square root of 2, as the length, but what does that mean and what is its justification? For Berlinski, who is fundamentally concerned with the nature of continuity, this question about the continuum of real numbers functions like the first statement of a musical theme.

The second question—how are we to understand change?—intro-

David Guaspari *is a mathematician in Ithaca, New York.*

Out-of-Print
Books
of Jewish Interest
Bought & Sold
Catalogue upon request
Schwartz Judaica
Dept. C
1934 Pentuckett Ave.
San Diego, CA 92104-5732
Phone: 619 232-5888
Fax: 619 233-5833
Schwartz@cts.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

duces the most difficult technical ideas in the book, *function* and *limit*. (Both originated early in the 19th century with Cauchy, "the first modern mathematician.") A function is a new kind of mathematical entity corresponding to Galileo's notion of *how*—it is a pure correlation of time and appearance, agnostic about cause. After 1 second, a ball has fallen 16 feet; after 1.5 seconds, 36 feet; after 2 seconds, 64. But how can a mere heap of separate correlations capture what is a seamless process? The connection is made by the subtle notion of limit, which allows Berlinski to develop his discussion of continuity, enlarging it to include the interplay between the discrete (individual correlations) and the continuous (process).

The story culminates in calculus's central result, "the Fundamental Theorem," a finding as deserving of its definite article and honorific capitalization as was Aristotle of his medieval title "the Philosopher." Very roughly, the Fundamental Theorem formulates a precise, and pregnant, equivalence between a function describing a process's rate of change (such as the speed of a falling object) and one describing its accumulated change (the distance the object travels). It makes a pleasing capstone to Berlinski's discussion, not only because of its intrinsic importance but because it puts to work what has gone before: the dialogue between algebra and geometry and the taming of continuity, area, and speed by the notion of limit.

A Tour of the Calculus offers much to admire. It is a popular but honest explanation of beautiful and deep mathematics, refusing to patronize or demoralize readers with winks to reassure them that "getting it" does not matter. Berlinski clearly savors the comedy of teaching, and—just as in his essays in COMMENTARY*—is consistently full of high spirits, whether he is opinionizing, salting his text with literary jokes, or otherwise cutting up. Indeed, throughout, the expedition is conducted as serious play, with Berlinski displaying a swagger plainly modeled on Vladimir Nabokov's *Lectures on Literature*, down to the same fondness for alliteration ("moist mystery," "poignant particularity") and cinematic tricks ("the bright blue water of the pool . . . rushing up to meet that tender tummy").

A Tour of the Calculus thus aspires to, and often attains, artfulness. It is also, however, marred by a tendency too often in evidence in popular scientific writing—a tendency to confuse mystery with mystification, intelligent wonder with *Oh, wow!* So, for example, difficulties about the real number continuum are introduced thus:

> The square root of 2 . . . is not there, it cannot be found, it is not a part of the furniture of this or any other world.

And the rigorous theory of real numbers concludes with this cadenza:

> Where before there was nothing more than an emptiness answering to the square root of 2, a new number now appears, a Dark Prince, an object utterly unlike any rational number, one flushed from the shadows and full of brooding mystery.

Berlinski knows when he is horsing around, but for an innocent reader his book offers too many occasions of sin.

A CODA to *A Tour of the Calculus* speculates that the story it tells is indeed over, that the reign of physics and its accompanying mathematical disciplines, among which calculus is preeminent, is coming to a close. Biology, Berlinski suggests, will take center stage, less because of the practical and political consequences of biotechnology than because the terms of physics have proved inadequate to human experience. Where physics is reductive, theoretical, and abstract, biology embraces variety, appearance, and arbitrariness. We are ready, Berlinski believes, to trade analytical depth for descriptive adequacy, for a science requiring none of the "mathematical analysis" in which calculus plays a central role.

Perhaps. But the story so far, a world-transforming adventure, is enduringly important. Years ago, when a friend asked what need she had of calculus, I blustered, why do you need *King Lear? A Tour of the Calculus*, despite its idiosyncrasies, is a spirited and welcome attempt at a more adequate reply.

* "The Soul of Man Under Physics" (January 1996) and "The Deniable Darwin" (June 1996).

The Founder

The Unknown Lenin:
From the Secret Archive
edited by Richard Pipes
Yale. 204 pp. $27.50

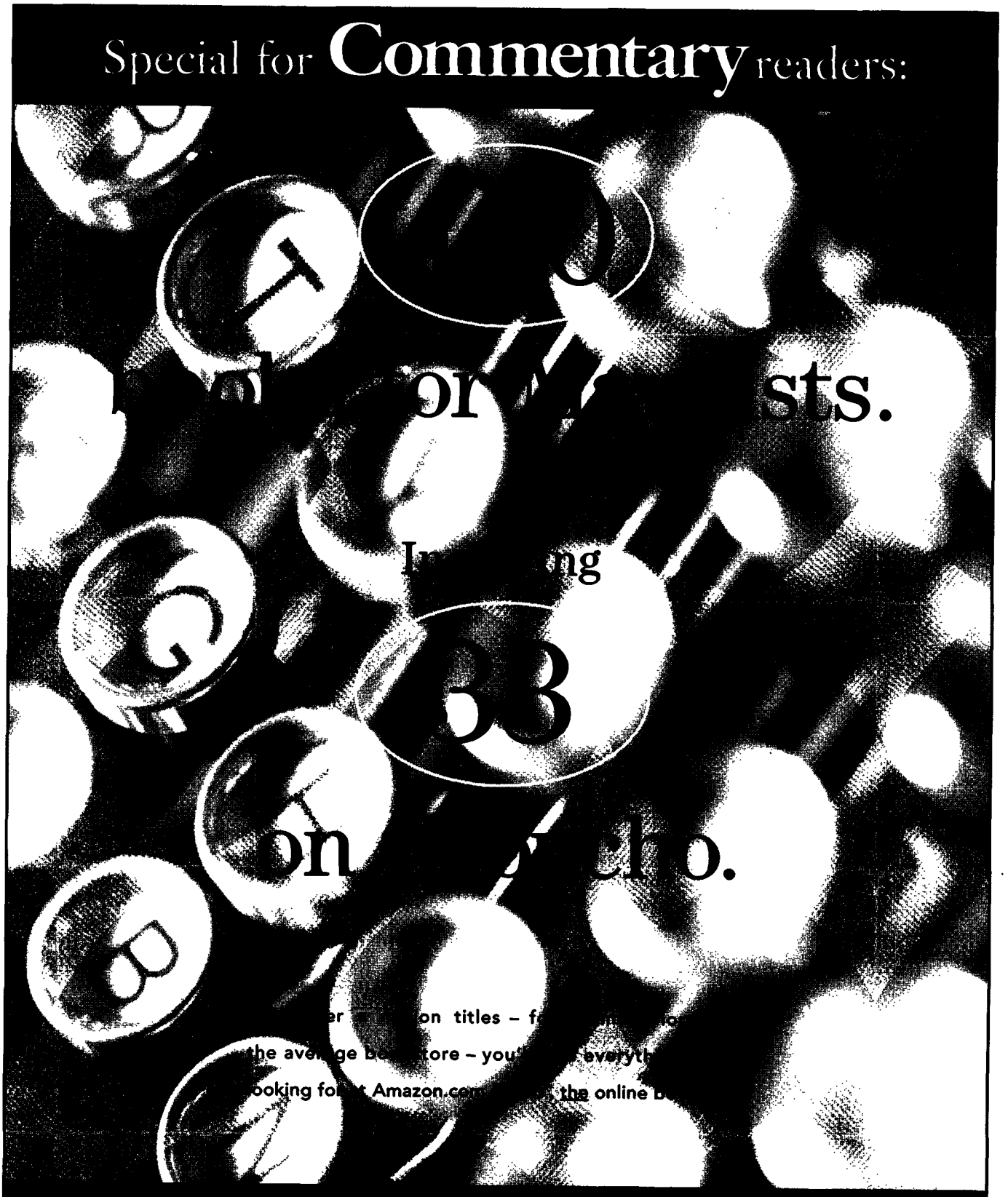
Reviewed by
George Weigel

IN 1970, the Paris-based Russian-émigré journal *Herald of the Christian Movement* published a letter dated March 1922 from V.I. Lenin to the Soviet politburo; the journal claimed the letter had been smuggled out of the Communist party's central archive in Moscow. At the time, the document, which contains extraordinarily brutal instructions for looting precious religious artifacts from Russian Orthodox churches and then selling them for hard currency, was widely dismissed as a forgery. Only a mind fevered by cold-war anti-Communism, it was suggested, could have concocted such outlandish words

GEORGE WEIGEL, *a frequent contributor to* COMMENTARY, *is a senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Special for **Commentary** readers:



www.amazon.com

Log onto **http://www.amazon.com/go-commentary**
for books reviewed in COMMENTARY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and attributed them to the great Soviet leader:

> It is precisely now and only now, when in the starving regions people are eating human flesh, and hundreds if not thousands of corpses are littering the roads, that we can (and therefore must) carry out the confiscation of church valuables with the most savage and merciless energy, not stopping [short of] crushing any resistance.

But the letter was genuine. Moreover, as Richard Pipes's crisply edited collection from Soviet archives now makes plain, it spoke in the voice of the authentic Lenin: a man of ferocious hatreds and manic energy, ideologically besotted, ruthless to the core, and utterly devoid of ethical sentiments—sentiments which he contemptuously dismissed as mere "bourgeois morality."

This book should settle, once and for all, the old argument about the relationship between Lenin's politics and the Stalinist horrors that were to come: the latter were no aberration, but a logical working-out of the former. And *The Unknown Lenin* also sheds much light on a wide range of other issues connected to the Russian Revolution and its consequences.

Students of the internecine struggles within the Soviet Communist party, for instance, will find much to ponder here in Lenin's judgments on his Bolshevik colleagues. Trotsky, Lenin's cardinal theoretician and military genius, was (according to the master) a man "in love with the organization" who, when it came to politics, "hasn't got a clue." As these documents illustrate throughout, it was not Trotsky on whom Lenin relied but rather Stalin, and he did so, Pipes observes, "not only in running day-to-day government operations but also in setting major policy goals."

Scholars (and psychologists) will likewise be intrigued by the degree to which Lenin tried to micromanage the revolution of which he was, in his own judgment, the indispensable custodian. Thus, one 1920 telegram to the provinces instructs regional authorities on the fine points of livestock production in regard to their sheep and pigs, while a 1921 telegram to the "Fuel Directorate of Tsaritsyn Province" orders the locals to ship a quantity of logs to Baku, their measurements specified to fractions of an inch.

As for foreign policy, the most gripping reading in *The Unknown Lenin* concerns the Soviet-Polish war of 1919-20. That conflict has been virtually forgotten in the West. In particular, Polish claims that the battle of the Vistula in August 1920 was one of the key events of contemporary history—in it, Pilsudski's Poles broke the momentum of Tukhachevsky's invading Red Army—have usually been dismissed as romantic nonsense. But Pipes's documents demonstrate that the Poles had it right all along. As Lenin himself conceded in a lengthy secret speech to party officials, Poland was expected to be the *entr'acte* to the triumphant conquest of all of Western Europe, including England, by Soviet armed forces allied with local Communists. The Red Army's failed invasion of Poland was thus "a turning point for the world," bringing to an end a gigantic effort to exploit the revolutionary fervor of the German, French, and English proletariat.

In this same speech, Lenin also offered a defense of the Soviet attempt to dismantle the Versailles arrangement and destabilize the Allies by forging a coalition with German right-wing extremists—a stratagem, Pipes notes acerbically, "which was consummated two decades later in the Hitler-Stalin pact." Given the evidence now available from party archives, that later diplomatic shocker, which paved the way for World War II, was no anomaly; Stalin was once again merely marching in the tactical footsteps of his mentor.

THE DOCUMENTS assembled in *The Unknown Lenin* offer nothing less than a microcosm of the whole tawdry history of the Soviet Union: the lies; the cynicism; the state terrorism; the anti-Semitism; the persecution of dissident intellectuals; the profound animus against religion; the ubiquitous internal-security apparatus; the economic idiocy; the international subversion; the use of "medicine" to "cure" the ideologically unsound of their dubieties; the contempt for the workers in whose name the revolution was putatively organized and executed. All of this began with Lenin, and there is no escaping his responsibility for it. About that, there can no longer be serious dispute.

Indeed, after reading these documents, only one question remains: why does Russia continue to afford a place of honor in its national capital to the mummified corpse of this unspeakably wicked man, the progenitor of totalitarianism and the archetype of the political mass murderer?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You know you love surprises... let's bring it in!

—Advisor to Priam, the King of Troy around 1184B.C.

In global infrastructure finance, the wrong advice can open the door to trouble on your project.

For your next project, you need a financial advisor that will provide you with objective, unbiased ideas designed to suit your long-term needs—first, and only. An advisor with extensive global reach—one that will deliver access to virtually every public and private capital market worldwide.

You'll find what you need at Fieldstone Private Capital Group, one of the world's leading independent infrastructure finance and advisory firms.

Fieldstone creates customized solutions based upon a thorough understanding of your objectives, the commercial arrangements, the global capital markets, and of the political hurdles that must be cleared on the road to your project's success.

As a result of our client-focused approach, Fieldstone has been ranked as a leading project finance advisory firm for the past four years. To date, Fieldstone has served as advisor for over $7 billion in transactions for clients, worldwide.

From global public and private non-recourse debt and equity placements, to 144A transactions, to cross border lease structures, and high yield financings, let Fieldstone help you make the right decision for your next infrastructure project.

Please contact any of the following offices:

New York	London	Kuala Lumpur
1-212-692-3400	44-171-233-3190	60-3-201-1703

FIELDSTONE

PRIVATE CAPITAL GROUP

New York • London • Hong Kong • Kuala Lumpur • Bangkok • Prague • Sydney

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BECAUSE WE'LL RECYCLE OVER 200 MILLION PLASTIC BOTTLES THIS YEAR, LANDFILLS CAN BE FILLED WITH OTHER THINGS. LIKE LAND, FOR INSTANCE.

We can't make more land. But we can do more to protect what we have. In fact, this year Phillips Petroleum's plastics recycling plant will process over 200 million containers. This effort will help reduce landfill waste and conserve natural resources. And that will leave another little corner of the world all alone. At Phillips, that's what it means to be The Performance Company.

PHILLIPS PETROLEUM COMPANY

PHILLIPS 66

For an annual report on Phillips' health, environmental and safety performance, write to: HES Report, 16 A1 PB, Bartlesville, OK 74004, or visit us at www.phillips66.com.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED